

# **Holiness**

**The False and the True**

**By H.A. Ironside**

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By Henry Allan Ironside



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# Preface

For over twelve years I have considered the advisability of penning these chapters. There seemed some good reasons why it might not be wise; there seem to me now to be more why I should undertake it.

The two chief reasons that have come before me to hinder my writing them heretofore are these:

(1) The detailing of a large measure of personal experience is necessarily involved. This is distasteful to many, and to none more than to myself. But I have been much impressed lately with the many instances in which the chief of the apostles uses his own experience as a warning and lesson to others who would put confidence in the flesh. For this cause alone I am at last persuaded to narrate my own endeavors to attain perfection by following the so-called "holiness teaching." There can surely be no charge

brought against me of glorying in self in so doing. The record is too humiliating for that. Nor do I desire to take a morbid satisfaction in detailing my failures. But for this recital of my past errors and present blessedness I have not only apostolic example, but the entire book of Ecclesiastes is a similar record; written only that others might be spared the anguish and disappointment of treading the same weary path.

(2) It is difficult to write an account like this without apparent criticism of the organization to which I once belonged, both as to its methods and its doctrines. This I shrink from. I have the fullest sympathy with the great work being done among the “submerged” in the larger cities of the world by these self-denying workers, and I would not say or write a word to hinder any who thus seek to save the outcast and wayward. I only regret that the converts are not given a clearer gospel, and more scriptural instruction afterwards. Many of my old “comrades” are still toiling as I once toiled in what they believe is a God-raised-up and God-directed “Army”; whose teaching they consider to be fully in accord with Scripture; and I know this record must give some of them pain. I would spare them this if I could. But when I reflect that thousands are yearly being disheartened and discouraged by their teaching; that hundreds yearly are ensnared into infidelity through the collapse of the vain effort to attain the unattainable; that scores have actually lost their minds and are now inmates of asylums because of the mental grief and anguish resultant upon their bitter disappointment in the search for holiness; I feel I should not allow sentimental reasons to hinder my relating the unvarnished truth, in the hope that under the blessing of God it may lead many to find in Christ Himself

## Preface

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that sanctification which they can never find elsewhere, and in His Cross that exhibition of perfect love which they will look for in vain in their own hearts and lives.

Therefore I send forth these chapters, praying that both the experimental and doctrinal parts may be helpful to many and hindrances to none; and in commending all to the reader's spiritual intelligence, I would earnestly beseech him to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good."

# **Part One: Autobiographical**

## My Conversion to God

It is my desire, in dependence on the Lord, to write a faithful record, so far as memory now serves me, of some of God's dealings with my soul and my strivings after the experience of holiness, during the first six years of my Christian life, before I knew the blessedness of finding *all* in Christ. This will make it necessary at times, I have little doubt, to "speak as a fool" — even as the Apostle Paul did: but as I reflect on the need for such a record, I think I can say with him, "Ye have compelled me."

If I may be privileged to thereby save others from the unhappy experiences I passed through in those early years, I shall feel abundantly repaid for the effort it will take to thus put these heart-experiences before my readers.

From a very early age God began to speak to me through His Word. I doubt if I could go back to the *first* time when,

to my recollection, I felt something of the reality of eternal things.

My father was taken from me before his features were impressed upon my infant mind. But I never have heard him spoken of other than as a man of God. He was known in Toronto (my birthplace) to many as "The Eternity Man." His Bible, marked in many places, was a precious legacy to me; and from it I learned to recite my first verse of Scripture, at the age of four. I distinctly recall learning the blessed words of Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." That I was lost, and that Christ Jesus came from heaven to save me, were the first divine truths impressed on my young heart.

My widowed mother was, it seems to me, one of a thousand. I remember yet how I would be thrilled as she knelt with me as a child, and prayed, "O Father, keep my boy from ever desiring anything greater than to live for Thee. Save him early, and make him a devoted street-preacher, as his father was. Make him willing to suffer for Jesus' sake, to gladly endure persecution and rejection by the world that cast out Thy Son; and keep him from what would dishonor Thee." The words were not always the same, but I have heard the sentiment times without number.

To our home there often came servants of Christ — plain, godly men, who seemed to me to carry with them the atmosphere of eternity. Yet in a very real sense they were the bane of my boyhood. Their searching, "Henry, lad, are you born again yet?" or the equally impressive, "Are you *certain* that your soul is saved?" often brought me to a standstill; but I knew not how to reply.

California had become my home before I was clear as to being a child of God. In Los Angeles I first began to learn

the love of the world, and was impatient of restraint. Yet I had almost continual concern as to the great matter of my salvation.

I was but twelve years old when I began a Sunday-school and set up to try to help the boys and girls of the neighborhood to a knowledge of the Book I had read ten times through, but which had still left me without assurance of salvation.

To Timothy, Paul wrote, "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation *through faith which is in Christ Jesus*" (2 Tim. 3:15). It was this latter that I lacked. I had, it seemed to me, *always* believed, yet I dared not say I was saved. I know now that I had always believed *about* Jesus. I had not really believed in Him as *my* personal Saviour. Between the two there is all the difference that there is between being saved and lost, between an eternity in heaven and endless ages in the lake of fire.

As I have said, I was not without considerable anxiety as to my soul; and though I longed to break into the world, and was indeed guilty of much that was vile and wicked, I ever felt a restraining hand upon me, keeping me from many things that I would otherwise have gone into; and a certain religiousness became, I suppose, characteristic. But religion is not salvation.

I was nearly fourteen years old when, upon returning one day from school, I learned that a servant of Christ from Canada, well known to me, had arrived for meetings. I knew, before I saw him, how he would greet me; for I remembered him well, and his searching questions, when I was younger. Therefore I was not surprised, but embarrassed

nevertheless, when he exclaimed, "Well, Harry, lad, I'm glad to see you. And are you born again yet?"

The blood mantled my face; I hung my head, and could find no words to reply. An uncle present said, "You know, Mr. M — , he preaches himself now a bit, and conducts a Sunday-school!"

"Indeed!" was the answer. "Will you get your Bible, Harry?"

I was glad to get out of the room, and so went at once for my Bible, and returned, after remaining out as long as seemed decent, hoping thereby to recover myself. Upon my reentering the room, he said, kindly, but seriously, "Will you turn to Romans 3:19, and read it aloud?"

Slowly I read, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." I *felt* the application, and was at a loss for words. The evangelist went on to tell me that he too had been once a religious sinner, till God stopped his mouth, and then gave him a sight of Christ. He pressed on me the importance of getting to the same place before I tried to teach others.

The words had their effect. From that time till I was sure I was saved, I refrained from talking of these things, and I gave up my Sunday-school work. But now Satan, who was seeking my soul's destruction, suggested to me, "If lost and unfit to speak of religious things to others, why not enjoy all the world has to offer, so far as you are able to avail yourself of it?"

I listened only too eagerly to his words, and for the next six months or thereabouts no one was more anxious for folly than I, though always with a smarting conscience.

## My Conversion to God

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At last, on a Thursday evening in February, 1890, God spoke to me in tremendous power while out at a party with a lot of other young people, mostly older than myself, intent only on an evening's amusement. I remember now that I had withdrawn from the parlor for a few moments to obtain a cooling drink in the next room. Standing alone by a refreshment table, there came home to my inmost soul, in startling clearness, some verses of Scripture I had learned months before. They are found in the first chapter of Proverbs, beginning with verse 24 and going on to verse 32. Here wisdom is represented as laughing at the calamity of the one who refused to heed instruction, and mocking when his fear cometh. Every word seemed to burn its way into my heart. I saw as never before my dreadful guilt in having so long refused to trust Christ for myself, and in having preferred my own willful way to that of Him who had died for me.

I went back to the parlor, and tried to join with the rest in their empty follies. But all seemed utterly hollow, and the tinsel was gone. The light of eternity was shining into the room, and I wondered how any could laugh with God's judgment hanging over us, like a Damocles' sword suspended by a hair. We seemed like people sporting with closed eyes on the edge of a precipice, and I the most careless of all, till grace had made me see.

That night, when all was over, I hurried home, and crept upstairs to my room. There, after lighting a lamp, I took my Bible, and, with it before me, fell upon my knees.

I had an undefined feeling that I had better pray. But the thought came, "What shall I pray for?" Clearly and distinctly came back the answer, "For what God has been

offering me for years. Why not then receive it, and thank Him?"

My dear mother had often said, "The place to begin with God is at Romans 3, or John 3." To both these scriptures I turned, and read them carefully. Clearly I saw that I was a helpless sinner, but that for me Christ had died, and that salvation was offered freely to all who trusted in Him. Reading John 3:16 the second time, I said, "That will do. O God, I thank Thee that Thou hast loved me, and given Thy Son for me. I trust Him now as my Saviour, and I rest on Thy Word, which tells me I have everlasting life."

Then I expected to feel a thrill of joy. It did not come. I wondered if I could be mistaken. I expected a sudden rush of love for Christ. It did not come either. I feared I could not be really saved with so little emotion.

I read the words again. There could be no mistake. God loved the world, of which I formed a part. God gave His Son to save all believers. I believed in Him as my Saviour. Therefore I must have everlasting life. Again I thanked Him, and rose from my knees to begin the walk of faith. God could not lie. I knew I must be saved.

# Holiness: the Great Desideratum

Being saved myself, the first great desire that sprang up in my heart was an intense longing to lead others to the One who had made my peace with God.

At the time of which I write, the Salvation Army was in the zenith of its energy as an organization devoted to going out after the lost. It had not yet become popular, a society to be patronized by the world and used as a medium for philanthropic work. Its officers and soldiers seemed to have but one aim and object — to lead the weary and despairing to the Saviour's feet. I had often attended its services, and in fact had frequently, though but a child, given a "testimony" by quoting Scripture and urging sinners to trust Christ, even while I was in the dark myself.

Naturally therefore, when the knowledge of salvation was mine, I went at the first opportunity, the night after my conversion, to an "Army" street-meeting, and there spoke for the first time, in the open air, of the grace of God so newly revealed to my soul.

I suppose, because I was but a lad of fourteen and fairly familiar with the Bible, and also somewhat forward — unduly so, I have little doubt — I was at once cordially welcomed among them, and soon became known as "the boy preacher," a title which, I fear, ministered more to the pride of my heart than I had any idea of at the time. For, in fact, in my new-found joy I had no conception that I still carried about with me a nature as sinful and vile as existed in the breast of the greatest evildoer in the world. I knew something of Christ and His love; I knew little or nothing of myself and the deceitfulness of my own heart.

As nearly as I can now recollect, I was in the enjoyment of the knowledge of God's salvation about a month when, in some dispute with my brother, who was younger than I, my temper suddenly escaped control, and in an angry passion I struck and felled him to the ground. Horror immediately filled my soul. I needed not his sarcastic taunt, "Well, you are a nice Christian! You'd better go down to the Army and tell what a saint you've become!" to send me to my room in anguish of heart to confess my sin to God in shame and bitter sorrow, as afterwards frankly to my brother, who generously forgave me.

From this time on mine was an "up-and-down experience," to use a term often heard in "testimony meetings." I longed for perfect victory over the lusts and desires of the flesh. Yet I seemed to have more trouble with evil thoughts and unholy propensities than I had

ever known before. For a long time I kept these conflicts hidden, and known only to God and to myself. But after some eight or ten months, I became interested in what were called “holiness meetings,” held weekly in the “Army” hall, and also in a mission I sometimes attended. At these gatherings an experience was spoken of which I felt was just what I needed. It was designated by various terms: “The Second Blessing”; “Sanctification”; “Perfect Love”; “Higher Life”; “Cleansing From Inbred Sin”; and by other expressions.

Substantially, the teaching was this: When converted, God graciously forgives all sins committed up to the time when one repents. But the believer is then placed in a lifelong probation, during which he may at any time forfeit his justification and peace with God if he falls into sin from which he does not at once repent. In order, therefore, to maintain himself in a saved condition, he needs a further work of grace called sanctification. This work has to do with sin the root, as justification had to do with sins the fruit.

The steps leading up to this second blessing are, firstly, conviction as to the need of holiness (just as in the beginning there was conviction of the need of salvation); secondly, a full surrender to God, or the laying of every hope, prospect and possession on the altar of consecration; thirdly, to claim in faith the incoming of the Holy Spirit as a refining fire to burn out all inbred sin, thus destroying in toto every lust and passion, leaving the soul perfect in love and as pure as unfallen Adam. This wonderful blessing received, great watchfulness is required lest, as the serpent beguiled Eve, he deceive the sanctified soul, and thus introduce again the same kind of an evil principle which called for such drastic action before.

Such was the teaching; and coupled with it were heartfelt testimonies of experiences so remarkable that I could not doubt their genuineness, nor that what others seemed to enjoy was likewise for me if I would fulfil the conditions.

One aged lady told how for forty years she had been kept from sin in thought, word, and deed. Her heart, she declared, was no longer “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,” but was as holy as the courts of heaven, since the blood of Christ had washed away the last remains of inbred sin. Others spoke in a similar way, though their experiences were much briefer. Bad tempers had been rooted out when a full surrender was made. Evil propensities and unholy appetites had been instantly destroyed when holiness was claimed by faith. Eagerly I began to seek this precious boon of holiness in the flesh. Earnestly I prayed for this Adamic sinlessness. I asked God to reveal to me every unholy thing, that I might truly surrender all to Him. I gave up friends, pursuits, pleasures — everything I could think of that might hinder the incoming of the Holy Spirit and the consequent blessing. I was a veritable “book-worm,” an intense love for literature possessing me from childhood; but in my ignorant desire I put away all books of pleasurable or instructive character, and promised God to read only the Bible and holiness writings if He would only give me “the blessing.” I did not, however, obtain what I sought, though I prayed zealously for weeks.

At last, one Saturday night (I was now away from home, living with a friend a member of the “Army”), I determined to go out into the country and wait on God, not returning till I had received the blessing of perfect love. I took a train at eleven o’clock, and went to a lonely station twelve

miles from Los Angeles. There I alighted, and, leaving the highway, descended into an empty *arroyo*, or water-course. Falling on my knees beneath a sycamore tree, I prayed in an agony for hours, beseeching God to show me anything that hindered my reception of the blessing. Various matters of too private and sacred a nature to be here related came to my mind. I struggled against conviction, but finally ended by crying, "Lord, I give up *all* — everything, every person, every enjoyment, that would hinder my living alone for Thee. Now give me, I pray Thee, the blessing!"

As I look back, I believe I was fully surrendered to the will of God at that moment, so far as I understood it. But my brain and nerves were unstrung by the long midnight vigil and the intense anxiety of previous months, and I fell almost fainting to the ground. Then a holy ecstasy seemed to thrill all my being. This I thought was the coming into my heart of the Comforter. I cried out in confidence, "Lord, I believe Thou dost come in. Thou dost cleanse and purify me from all sin. I claim it now. The work is done. I am sanctified by Thy blood. Thou dost make me holy. I believe; I believe!" I was unspeakably happy. I felt that all my struggles were ended.

With a heart filled with praise, I rose from the ground and began to sing aloud. Consulting my watch, I saw it was about half-past three in the morning. I felt I must hasten to town so as to be in time for the seven o'clock prayer-meeting, there to testify to my experience. Fatigued as I was by being up all night, yet so light was my heart I scarcely noticed the long miles back, but hastened to the city, arriving just as the meeting was beginning, buoyed up by my new-found experience. All were rejoiced as I told what great things I believed God had done for me. Every

meeting that day added to my gladness. I was literally intoxicated with joyous emotions.

My troubles were all ended now. The wilderness was past, and I was in Canaan, feeding on the old corn of the land. Nevermore should I be troubled by inward drawings toward sin. My heart was pure. I had reached the desirable state of full sanctification. With no foe within, I could direct all my energies toward vanquishing the enemies without.

This was what I thought. Alas, how little did I know myself; much less the mind of God!

## Sunshine and Clouds

For some weeks after the eventful experience before described, I lived in a dreamily-happy state, rejoicing in my fancied sinlessness. One great idea had possession of my mind; and whether at work or in my leisure hours, I thought of little else than the wonderful event which had taken place. But gradually I began to “come back to earth,” as it were. I was now employed in a photographic studio, where I associated with people of various tastes and habits, some of whom ridiculed, some tolerated, and others sympathized with, my radical views on things religious. Night after night I attended the meetings, speaking on the street and indoors, and I soon noticed (and doubtless others did too) that a change came over my “testimonies.” Before, I had always held up Christ, and pointed the lost to Him. Now, almost imperceptibly, my own experience became my theme, and

I held up *myself* as a striking example of consecration and holiness! This was the prevailing characteristic of the brief addresses made by most of the “advanced” Christians in our company. The youngest in grace magnified Christ. The “sanctified” magnified themselves. A favorite song will make this more manifest than any words of mine. It is still widely used in Army meetings, and finds a place in their Song or Hymnbooks. I give only one verse as a specimen:

*“Some people I know don’t live holy;  
They battle with unconquered sin,  
Not daring to consecrate fully,  
Or they full salvation would win.  
With malice they have constant trouble,  
From doubting they long to be free;  
With most things about them they grumble;  
Praise God, this is not so with ME!”*

Will the reader believe me when I say that I sang this wretched doggerel without a thought of the sinful pride to which it was giving expression? I considered it my duty to continually direct attention to “my experience of full salvation,” as it was called. “If you don’t testify to it, you will lose the blessing,” was accepted as an axiom among us.

As time went on, I began to be again conscious of inward desires toward evil — of thoughts that were unholy. I was nonplused. Going to a leading teacher for help, he said, “These are but temptations. Temptation is not sin. You only sin if you yield to the evil suggestion.” This gave me peace for a time. I found it was the general way of excusing such evident movings of a fallen nature, which was supposed to have been eliminated. But gradually I sank to a lower and lower plane, permitting things I would once have shunned; and I even observed that all about me

did the same. The first ecstatic experiences seldom lasted long. The ecstasy departed, and the “sanctified” were in very little different from their brethren who were supposed to be “only justified.” We did not commit overt acts of evil: therefore we were sinless. Lust was not sin unless yielded to: so it was easy to go on testifying that all was right.

I purposely pass briefly over the next four years. In the main they were seasons of ignorantly happy service. I was young in years and in grace. My thoughts of sin, as well as of holiness, were very unformed and imperfect. Therefore it was easy, generally speaking, to think that I was living without the one, and manifesting the other. When doubts assailed, I treated them as temptations of the devil. If I became unmistakably conscious that I had actually sinned, I persuaded myself that at least it was not wilful, but rather a mistake of the mind than an intentional error of the heart. Then I went to God in confession, and prayed to be cleansed from secret faults.

When but sixteen years of age I became a cadet; that is, a student preparing for officership in the Salvation Army. During my probation in the Oakland Training Garrison I had more trouble than at any other time. The rigorous discipline and enforced intimate association with young men of so various tastes and tendencies, as also degrees of spiritual experience, was very hard on one of my supersensitive temperament. I saw very little holiness there, and I fear I exhibited much less. In fact, for the last two out of my five months' term I was all at sea, and dared not profess sanctification at all, owing to my low state. I was tormented with the thought that I had backslidden, and might be lost eternally after all my former happy experiences of the Lord's goodness. Twice I slipped out of

the building when all were in bed, and made my way to a lonely spot where I spent the night in prayer, beseeching God not to take His Holy Spirit from me, but to again cleanse me fully from all inbred sin. Each time I “claimed it by faith,” and was brighter for a few weeks ; but I inevitably again fell into doubt and gloom, and was conscious of sinning both in thought and in word, and sometimes in unholy actions, which brought terrible remorse.

Finally, I was commissioned as Lieutenant. Again I spent the night in prayer, feeling that I must not go out to teach and lead others unless myself pure and holy. Buoyed up with the thought of being free from the restraint I had been subjected to so long, it was comparatively easy this time to believe that the work of full inward cleansing was indeed consummated, and that I was now, if never before, actually rid of all carnality.

How readily one yields himself to self-deception in a matter of this kind! From this time on I became a more earnest advocate of the second blessing than ever; and I remember that often I prayed God to give my dear mother the blessing He had given me, and to make her as holy as her son had become. And that pious mother had known Christ before I was born, and knew her own heart too well to talk of sinlessness, though living a devoted, Christlike life!

As lieutenant for a year, and then as captain,<sup>1</sup> I thoroughly enjoyed my work, gladly enduring hardship and privation that I fear I would shrink from now; generally confident that I was living out the doctrine of perfect love to God

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1 Perhaps I ought to explain for the benefit of the uninitiated that a “captain” has charge of a corps, or mission. A “lieutenant” assists a “captain.”

and man, and thereby making my own final salvation more secure. And yet, as I now look back, what grave failures I can detect — what an unsubdued will — what lightness and frivolity — what lack of subjection to the Word of God — what self-satisfaction and complacency! Alas, “man at his best state is altogether vanity.”

I was between eighteen and nineteen years of age when I began to entertain serious doubts as to my actually having attained so high a standard of Christian living as I had professed, and as the Army and other holiness movements advocated as the only real Christianity. What led to this was of too personal and private a nature to publish; but it resulted in struggle and efforts toward self-crucifixion that brought disappointment and sorrow of a most poignant character; but it showed me beyond a doubt that the doctrine of death to nature was a miserable sophism, and that the carnal mind was still a part of my being.

Nearly eighteen months of an almost constant struggle followed. In vain I searched my heart to see if I had made a full surrender, and tried to give up every known thing that seemed in any sense evil or doubtful. Sometimes, for a month at a time, or even longer, I could persuade myself that at last I had indeed again received the blessing. But invariably a few weeks would bring before me once more that which proved that it was in my particular case all a delusion.

I did not dare open my heart to my assistants in the work, or to the “soldiers” who were under my guidance. To do so I felt would be to lose all influence with them and to be looked upon as a backslider. So, alone and in secret, I fought my battles and never went into a holiness meeting without persuading myself that now at least, I was

fully surrendered and therefore must have the blessing of sanctification. Sometimes I called it entire consecration and felt easier. It did not seem to be claiming too much. I had no conception at the time of the hypocrisy of all this.

What made my distress more poignant was the knowledge that I was not the only sufferer. Another, one very dear to me, shared my doubts and anxieties from the same cause. For that other it eventually meant utter shipwreck of the faith; and one of the loveliest souls I ever knew was lost in the mazes of spiritualism. God grant it may not be forever, but that mercy may be found of the Lord in that day!

And now I began to see what a string of derelicts this holiness teaching left in its train. I could count scores of persons who had gone into utter infidelity because of it. They always gave the same reason: "I tried it all. I found it a failure. So I concluded the Bible teaching was all a delusion, and religion was a mere matter of the emotions." Many more (and I knew several such intimately) lapsed into insanity after floundering in the morass of this emotional religion for years — and people said that studying the Bible had driven them crazy. How little they knew that it was lack of Bible knowledge that was accountable for their wretched mental state — an absolutely unscriptural use of isolated passages of Scripture!

At last I became so troubled I could not go on with my work. I concluded to resign from the Salvation Army, and did so, but was persuaded by the colonel<sup>2</sup> to wait six months before the resignation took effect. At his suggestion I gave up corps work and went out on a special tour — where I did not need to touch the holiness question. But I preached

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2 Answering to a bishop in other denominations.

to others many times when I was tormented by the thought that I might myself be finally lost, because, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord"; and, try as I would, I could not be sure I possessed it. I talked with any who seemed to me to really have the blessing I craved; but there were very few who, upon an intimate acquaintanceship, seemed genuine. I observed that the general state of "sanctified" people was as low, if not often lower, than that of those whom they contemptuously described as "only justified."

Finally, I could bear it no longer, so asked to be relieved from all active service, and at my own request was sent to the Beulah Home of Rest, near Oakland.

It was certainly time; for five years' active work, with only two brief furloughs, had left me almost a nervous wreck, worn out in body and most acutely distressed in mind.

The language of my troubled soul, after all those years of preaching to others, was, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" Finding Him not, I saw only the blackness of despair before me; but yet I knew too well His love and care to be completely cast down.



## The Struggle Ended

I had now been for over five years laboring in the organization with which I had linked myself, and always seeking to be *certain* that I had attained a sinless state. In some twelve different towns and cities I had served, as I thought, faithfully, endeavoring to reach the lost, and to make out of them staunch Salvationists when converted. Many happy experiences had been mine, coupled, however, with some most gloomy disappointments, both as to myself and others. Very few of our “converts” stood. “Backsliders” often outnumbered by far our “soldiers.” The ex-Salvation Army was many times larger than the original organization.

One great reason for this I was blind to for a long time. But at last it began to be clear to me that the holiness doctrine had a most baneful influence upon the movement. People who professed conversion (whether real or not the

day will declare) struggled for months, even years, to reach a state of sinlessness which never was reached; and at last they gave up in despair and sank back in many instances to the dead level of the world around them.

I saw that it was the same with all the holiness denominations, and the various "Bands," "Missions," and other movements, that were continually breaking off from them. The standard set was the unattainable. The result was, sooner or later, utter discouragement, cunningly-concealed hypocrisy, or an unconscious lowering of the standard to suit the experience reached. For myself I had been ensnared by the last expedient for a long time. How much of the second there was I do not dare to say. But eventually I fell a victim to the first. And I can now see that it was a mercy I did so.

When I went to the Home of Rest I had not yet fully given up seeking for perfection in the flesh. I really expected great things from the six months' furlough granted me, in order to "find myself," as it were. Closely allied to the Home were other institutions where holiness and faith-healing were largely dwelt upon. I felt sure that in so hallowed an atmosphere great things would be accomplished.

In the Rest Home I found about fourteen officers, broken in health, seeking recuperation. I watched the ways and conversation of all most carefully, intending to confide in those who gave the best evidence of entire sanctification. There were some choice souls among them, and some arrant hypocrites. But holiness in the absolute sense I saw in none. Some were very godly and devoted. Their conscientiousness I could not doubt. But those who talked the loudest were plainly the least spiritual. They seldom read their Bibles, they rarely conversed together of

## The Struggle Ended

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Christ. An air of carelessness pervaded the whole place. Three sisters, most devoted women, were apparently more godly than any others; but two of them admitted to me that they were not *sure* about being perfectly holy. The other one was non-committal, though seeking to help me. Some were positively quarrelsome and boorish, and this I could not reconcile with their profession of freedom from inbred sin. I attended the meetings held by the other workers I have mentioned. There the best of them did not teach sinless perfection; while the manifestly carnal gloried in their experience of perfect love! Sick people testified to being healed by faith, and sinning people declared they had the blessing of holiness! I was not helped, but hindered, by the inconsistency of it all.

At last I found myself becoming cold and cynical. Doubts as to everything assailed me like a legion of demons, and I became almost afraid to let my mind dwell on these things. For refuge I turned to secular literature, and sent for my books, which some years before I had foresworn on condition that God would give me the "second blessing." How little I realized the Jacob-spirit in all this! God seemed to have failed; so I took up my books once more, and tried to find solace in the beauties of essays and poetry, or the problems of history and science. I did not dare to confess to myself that I was literally an agnostic; yet for a month at least I could only answer, "I do not know" to every question based on divine revelation.

This was the legitimate result of the teaching I had been under. I reasoned that the Bible promised entire relief from indwelling sin to all who were wholly surrendered to the will of God. That I had thus surrendered seemed to me certain. Why then had I not been fully delivered from

the carnal mind? It seemed to me that I had met every condition, and that God, on His part, had failed to perform what He had promised. I know it is wretched to write all this: but I see no other way to help others who are in the same state that I was in for that awful month.

Deliverance came at last in a most unexpected way. A lassie-lieutenant, a woman some ten years my senior in age, was brought to the Home from Rock Springs, Wyoming, supposedly dying of consumption. From the first my heart went out to her in deep sympathy. To me she was a martyr, laying down her life for a needy world. I was much in her company, observed her closely, and finally came to the conclusion that she was the only wholly sanctified person in that place.

Imagine my surprise when, a few weeks after her arrival, she, with a companion, came to me one evening and begged me to read to her; remarking, "I hear you are always occupied with the things of the Lord, and I need your help." I the one to help her! I was dumfounded, knowing so well the plague of my own heart, and being so fully assured as to her perfection in holiness. At the very moment they entered my room I was reading Byron's "Childe Harold." And I was supposed to be entirely devoted to the things of God! It struck me as weird and fantastic, rather than as a solemn farce — all this comparing ourselves with ourselves, only to be deluded every time.

I hastily thrust the book to one side, and wondered what to choose to read aloud. In God's providence a pamphlet caught my attention which my mother had given me some years before, but which I had dreaded to read lest it might upset me; so afraid had I been of anything that did not bear the Army or Holiness stamp. Moved by a sudden

impulse, I drew it forth and said, "I'll read this. It is not in accordance with our teaching; but it may be interesting anyway." I read page after page, paying little attention, only hoping to soothe and quiet this dying woman. In it the lost condition of all men by nature was emphasized. Redemption in Christ through His death was explained. Then there was much as to the believer's two natures, and his eternal security, which to me seemed both ridiculous and absurd. The latter part was occupied with prophecy. Upon that we did not enter. I was startled after going over the first half of the book when Lieut. J — exclaimed, "O Captain, do you think that can possibly be true? If I could only believe that, I could die in peace!"

Astonished beyond measure, I asked, "What! do you mean to say you could not die in peace as you are? You are justified and sanctified; you have an experience I have sought in vain for years; and are you troubled about dying?" "I am miserable," she replied, "and you mustn't say I am sanctified. I cannot get it. I have struggled for years, but I have not reached it yet. This is why I wanted to speak with you, for I felt so sure you had it and could help me!"

We looked at each other in amazement; and as the pathos and yet ludicrousness of it all burst upon us, I laughed deliriously, while she wept hysterically. Then I remember exclaiming, "Whatever is the matter with us all? No one on earth denies himself more for Christ's sake than we. We suffer, and starve, and wear ourselves out in the endeavor to do the will of God; yet after all we have no lasting peace. We are happy at times; we enjoy our meetings; but we are never certain as to what the end will be."

"Do you think," she asked, "that it is because we depend upon our own efforts too much? Can it be that we trust

Christ to save us, but we think we have to keep saved by our own faithfulness — ?”

“But,” I broke in, “to think anything else would open the door to all kinds of sin!”

And so we talked till, wearied out, she arose to go, but asked if she and others might return the next evening to read and talk of these things we had gone over — a permission which was readily granted.

For both Lieut. J — and myself that evening’s reading and exchange of confidences proved the beginning of our deliverance. We had frankly owned to one another, and to the third party present, that we were not sanctified. We now began to search the Scriptures earnestly for light and help. I threw all secular books to one side, determined to let nothing hinder the careful, prayerful study of the Word of God. Little by little, the light began to dawn. We saw that we had been looking within for holiness, instead of without. We realized that the same grace that had saved us at first alone could carry us on. Dimly we apprehended that all for us must be in Christ, or we were without a ray of hope.

Many questions perplexed and troubled us. Much that we had believed we soon saw to be utterly opposed to the Word of God. Much more we could not understand, so completely warped had our minds become through the training of years. In my perplexity I sought out a teacher of the Word who, I understood, was in fellowship with the writer of the pamphlet I have referred to above. I heard him with profit on two occasions, but still was in measure bewildered, though I began to feel solid ground beneath my feet once more. The great truth was getting a grip of me that holiness, perfect love, sanctification, and every

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other blessing, were mine *in Christ* from the moment I had believed, and mine forevermore, because all of pure grace. I had been looking at the wrong man — all was in another Man, and in that Man for me! But it took weeks to see this.

A booklet blessed to many proved helpful to both of us. The title, *Safety, Certainty, and Enjoyment*, was itself a source of cheer. Other tracts were given me, and read with earnest purpose, looking up every reference, searching context and other passages of like, or apparently opposite, character, while daily we cried to God for the knowledge of His truth. Miss J — saw it before I did. The light came when she realized that she was eternally linked up with Christ as Head, and had eternal life in Him as the Vine, in her as the branch. Her joy knew no bounds, and she actually improved in health from that hour, and lived for six years after; finally going to be with the Lord, worn out in seeking to lead others to Christ. Many will be disappointed to know that she maintained her connection with the Army to the last. She had a mistaken (I believe) notion that she should remain where she was, and declare the truth she had learned. But before she died she repented of this. Her last words to a brother (A. B. S.) and me, who were with her very near the end, were: “I have everything in Christ — of that I am sure. But I wish I had been more faithful as to the truth I learned about the Body — the church. I was misled by zeal which I thought was of God, and *it is too late to be faithful now!*”

Four days after the truth burst upon her soul in that Home of Rest, I too had every doubt and fear removed, and found my all in Christ. To go on where I was, I could not. Within a week I was outside of the only human system I had ever been in as a Christian, and for many years since I

have known no head but Christ, nobody but the one church which He purchased with His own blood. They have been happy years; and as I look back over all the way the Lord has led me, I can but praise Him for the matchless grace that caused Him to set me free from introspection, and gave me to see that perfect holiness and perfect love were to be found, not in me, but in Christ Jesus alone.

And I have been learning all along my pilgrim journey that the more my heart is taken up with Christ, the more do I enjoy practical deliverance from sin's power, and the more do I realize what it is to have the love of God shed abroad in that heart by the Holy Spirit given to me, as the earnest of the glory to come. I have found liberty and joy since being thus freed from bondage that I never thought it possible for a soul to know on earth, while I have a confidence in presenting this precious truth for the acceptance of others that contrasts with the uncertainty of the past.

I purpose dwelling somewhat fully upon the truth that wrought my deliverance, in the second part of these chapters; but I desire, before closing the experimental part, to sum up in one more chapter my impressions of the Holiness movement.

# Observations on the Holiness Movement

Since turning aside from the perfectionist societies, I have often been asked if I find as high a standard maintained among Christians generally who do not profess to have the “second blessing” as I have seen among those who do. My answer is that after carefully, and I trust without prejudice, considering both, I have found a far higher standard maintained by believers who intelligently reject the eradication theory than among those who accept it. Quiet, unassuming Christians, who know their Bibles and their own hearts too well to permit their lips to talk of sinlessness and perfection in the flesh, nevertheless are characterized by intense devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, love for the Word of God, and holiness of life and walk.

But these blessed fruits spring, not from self-occupation, but from occupation with Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The great professing body who are scarcely clear or pronounced as to anything, I do not here take into account. I refer rather to those among the various denominations, and those outside of all such companies, who confess Christ boldly and seek to be a testimony for Him in the world. Compared with these, I repeat, a far lower standard of Christian living is found among the so-called holiness people.

The reasons are not far to seek; for in the first place the profession of holiness induces a subtle spiritual pride that is often true Pharisaism, and frequently leads to the most manifest self-confidence. And secondly, the next thing to saying I live without sin, is to say that nothing that I do is sin. Consequently, the teaching of holiness in the flesh tends to harden the conscience and to cause the one who professes it to lower the standard to his own poor experience. Any who move much among those in this profession will soon begin to realize how greatly prevalent are the conditions I have described. Holiness professors are frequently cutting, censorious, uncharitable and harsh in their judgment of others. Exaggerations, amounting to downright dishonesty, are unconsciously encouraged by and often indulged in in their "testimony" meetings. The rank and file are no freer from vulgarisms, slangy expressions, and levity in conversation than ordinary persons who make no such profession; while many of the preachers are largely given to sensational and amusing sermons that are anything but serious and edifying. And all this, mark you, without sinning!

The Apostle Paul emphasizes “envy, strife and divisions” as evidences of carnality, and designates them as the works of the flesh. Where have divisions, with all their accompanying evils, been more manifest than among the rival holiness organizations, some of which roundly denounce all connected with the others as “backsliders,” and “on the road to hell”? I have heard such denunciations on many occasions. The bitterness existing between the Salvation Army and the various offshoots therefrom — the Volunteers of America, the discredited American Salvation Army, the now defunct Gospel Army, and other “armies” — may be instanced as cases in point; while the other holiness societies have no brighter records. I have observed that debt and its twin brother, worry, are as common among such professors as among others. In fact, the sinfulness of worrying rarely seems to be apprehended by them. Holiness advocates have all the little unpleasant ways that are so trying in many of us: they are no more free from penuriousness, tattling, evil-speaking, selfishness, and kindred weaknesses, than their neighbors.

And as to downright wickedness and uncleanness, I regret to have to record that sins of a positively immoral character are, I fear, far more frequently met with in holiness churches and missions, and Salvation Army bands, than the outsider would think possible. I know whereof I speak; and only a desire to save others from the bitter disappointments I had to meet leads me to write as I do. Among Christians generally there are failures that shock and wound the sensibilities of many, occurring from time to time, through a lack of watching unto prayer. But surely, among the holiness people, such failures, if they ever occur, do so at very rare intervals! Would that I could say so. Alas, it is far

otherwise! The path of the holiness movement (including, of course, the Salvation Army) is strewn with thousands of such moral and spiritual breakdowns. I would not dare to try to tell of the scores, yea, hundreds, of “sanctified” officers and soldiers who to my personal knowledge were dismissed from or left the “Army” in disgrace during my five years’ officership. It will be objected that such persons had “lost their sanctification” before lapsing into these evil practices; but of what real value is a “sanctification” that leaves its possessor not one whit more to be relied upon than one who lays claim to nothing of the sort?

On the other hand, I gladly concede that both in the ranks of the religious-military society of which I was once a member, and in other holiness organizations, there are many, very many, pious, devoted men and women whose zeal for God and self-abnegation are lovely to witness, and will surely be rewarded in “that day.” But let no one be blinded by this to suppose it is the holiness doctrine that has made them such. The refutation of this is the simple fact that the great majority of martyrs, missionaries and servants of Christ who in all the Christian centuries have “loved not their lives unto the death,” never dreamed of making such a claim for themselves, but daily owned their sinfulness by nature and constant need of the advocacy of Christ.

The testimonies of many who were at one time prominent in other organizations where holiness in the flesh is preached and professed fully agree with mine as to the large percentage of “backslidings” from virtue and personal purity.

Superstition and fanaticism of the grossest character find a hotbed among “holiness” advocates. Witness the

present disgusting “Tongues Movement,” with all its attendant delusions and insanities. An unhealthy craving for new and thrilling religious sensations, and emotional meetings of a most exciting character, readily account for these things. Because settled peace is unknown, and final salvation is supposed to depend on progress in the soul, people get to depend so much upon “blessings,” and “new baptisms of the Spirit,” as they call these experiences, that they readily fall a prey to the most absurd delusions. In the last few years hundreds of holiness meetings all over the world have been literally turned into pandemoniums where exhibitions worthy of a madhouse or of a collection of howling dervishes are held night after night. No wonder a heavy toll of lunacy and infidelity is the frequent result.

Now I am well aware that many holiness teachers repudiate all connection with these fanatics; but they do not seem to see that it is their doctrines that are the direct cause of the disgusting fruits I have been enumerating. Let a full Christ be preached, a finished work be proclaimed, the truth of the indwelling Spirit be scripturally taught, and all these ugly additions disappear.

Perhaps the saddest thing about the movement to which I have referred is the long list of shipwrecks concerning the faith to be attributed to its unsound instruction. Large numbers of persons seek “holiness” for years only to find they have had the unattainable before them. Others profess to have received it, but are forced at last to own it was all a mistake. The result is sometimes that the mind gives way beneath the strain; but more frequently unbelief in the inspiration of the Scriptures is the logical result. It is for persons dangerously near these shoals of infidelity and darkness that I have penned these chapters. God’s

word remains true. He has *not* promised what He will *not* perform. It is you, dear troubled one, who have been misled by faulty teaching as to the true nature of sanctification, and the proper effects of the indwelling Spirit of God. Let neither gloomy unbelief nor melancholy disappointment hinder your reading the chapters that are to follow, and then searching the Scriptures daily whether these things be so. And may God in His rich grace and mercy give every self-occupied reader to look away to Christ alone, “who, of God, is made unto us wisdom: even righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”



# **Part Two: Doctrinal Sanctification**

## Its Meaning

In commencing our inquiry on the subject of sanctification as taught in the Scriptures, it is of importance first of all that there be a clear understanding of the meaning which writer and reader attach to the word. For if the writer have one thought in his mind when he uses this expression, and the reader be thinking of something totally different as he peruses the treatise, it is not to be supposed that a common conclusion will ever be reached.

I propose, then, first of all, to let the theologians and the holiness teachers define the word for us; and then to turn to Scripture, there to test their definitions. Examples: "In a doctrinal sense sanctification is the making truly and perfectly holy what was before defiled and sinful. It is a progressive work of divine grace upon the soul justified by the love of Christ. The believer is gradually cleansed from

the corruption of his nature, and is at length presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." This is a fair statement of the views held by ordinary Protestant theologians, and is taken from the Bible Dictionary edited by W. W. Rand, and published by the American Tract Society.

The secular dictionary definitions generally agree that "sanctification is an act of God's grace, whereby man's affections are purified and exalted." And this, it will be observed, practically accords with the definition already given.

Holiness writers are very explicit, and generally draw attention to what they suppose to be the difference between justification and sanctification. I shall not quote any of their authorities as to this, but put the teaching in my own language rather, *as I often taught it* in past years. My reason for this is that all holiness professors reading these pages may be able to judge for themselves as to whether I was "clear" as to the matter when numbered among them.

Justification, then, was supposed to be a work of grace by which sinners are made righteous and freed from their sinful habits when they come to Christ. But in the merely justified soul there remains a corrupt principle, an evil tree, or "a root of bitterness," which continually prompts to sin. If the believer obeys this impulse and willfully sins, he ceases to be justified; therefore the desirability of its removal, that the likelihood of backsliding may be greatly lessened. The *eradication* of this sinful root is *sanctification*. It is therefore the cleansing of the nature from all inbred sin by the blood of Christ (applied through faith when a full consecration is made), and the refining fire of the Holy Spirit, who burns out all dross when all is laid upon the altar of sacrifice. This,

and this only, is true sanctification — a distinct second work of grace, subsequent to justification, and without which that justification is very likely to be lost!

The correctness of the definition will, I think, be acknowledged by even the most radical of the “holiness” school.

Now let us test these statements by Scripture. And in order to do so intelligently, I purpose first to look at a number of passages in both Testaments, and see if in any of them either of the definitions given above would make good sense and sound doctrine. I would observe that holiness and sanctification are equivalent terms; both words being used to translate the one Greek or Hebrew noun. Twelve prominent examples may suffice to show how the term is used in our Bibles.

(1) The sanctification of inanimate objects is distinctly taught in the Word: “Thou shalt anoint the altar of the burnt offering, and all his vessels, and sanctify the altar: and it shall be an altar most holy. And thou shalt anoint the laver and his foot, and sanctify it” (Ex. 40:10).

Are we to suppose any change took place in the nature of these vessels? or was there any evil element rooted out of them?

Again, in Exodus 19:23 we read, “Set bounds about the mount [Sinai], and sanctify it.” Was any change effected in the composition of the mountain when God gave the law upon it? Let the reader answer fairly and honestly, and he must confess that here at least neither the theological nor the “holiness” definitions apply to the word “sanctify.” What it does *mean* we shall see later, when we have heard all of our twelve witnesses.

(2) People can sanctify themselves, without any act of divine power, or any work of grace taking place within them. “Let the priests also, which come near to the Lord, sanctify themselves” (Ex. 19:22). Were these priests then to change their own natures from evil to good, or to destroy from within themselves the principle of evil? Once more it is the readers’ province to judge. I adduce the witnesses: they must be the jury.

(3) One man could sanctify another. “Sanctify unto Me all the firstborn ... it is Mine” (Ex. 13:2); and, again, “The Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them ... let them wash their clothes” (Ex. 19:10). What inward change, or cleansing, was Moses to perform in regard to the first-born, or the entire people of Israel? That he did *not* eliminate their inbred sin, the succeeding chapters amply testify.

(4) Persons can sanctify themselves to do iniquity. “They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine’s flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord” (Isa. 66:17). How monstrous a sanctification was this, and how absurd the thought of any inward cleansing here!

(5) The Son was sanctified by the Father. “Say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?” (John 10:36). They, not He, blasphemed; and equally vile would be the blasphemy of any who said that sanctification, for Christ, implied a corrupt nature eradicated, or a perverse will changed. He was ever “that Holy Thing ... called the Son of God.”

There are not wanting “holiness” advocates who impiously dare to teach that the taint of sin was in His being, and needed elimination; but they are rightfully refused fellowship, and their teaching abhorred by all Spirit-taught Christians. Yet He, the Holy One, was “sanctified by God the Father,” as Jude writes of all believers. Are we to suppose the expression means one thing in relation to Christ, and quite another in regard to saints?

(6) The Lord Jesus sanctified Himself. “For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John 17:19). If either of the definitions given above is to stand, then what are we to make of the fact that He who had been sanctified by the Father, yet afterward sanctified Himself? Is it not plain that there is some great discrepancy here between the theologians, the perfectionists, and the Bible?

(7) Unbelievers are sometimes sanctified. “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by (in) the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by (in) the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy [or sanctified]” (1 Cor. 7:14). Here the life-partner of a Christian, though unsaved, is said to be sanctified. Is such a one, then, free from inbred sin, or undergoing a gradual change of nature? If this be too absurd for consideration, sanctification cannot mean either of the experiences specified.

(8) Carnal Christians are sanctified. “Paul, called an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus.” “I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ ... .For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and

strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” (1 Cor. 1:1-2; 3:1,3). Carnal, and yet free from inbred sin? Impossible! Nevertheless they who are declared to be sanctified in chapter 1 are said to be carnal in chapter 3. By no possible system of logical reasoning can the class of the latter chapter be made out to be different from those addressed in the former.

(9) We are told to follow sanctification. “Follow peace with all men, and holiness [sanctification], without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). In what sense could men *follow* a change of nature, or how follow the elimination of the carnal mind? I follow that which is before me — that to which I have not yet fully attained in a practical sense, as the Apostle Paul tells us he did, in Philippians 3:13-16.

(10) Believers are called upon to sanctify God! “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15). How are we to understand an exhortation like this if sanctification implies an inward cleansing, or making holy what was before unclean and evil? Is it not manifest that such a definition would lead to the wildest vagaries and the grossest absurdities?

(11) Persons addressed as sanctified are afterward exhorted to be holy. “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, *through sanctification* of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ ... As He which hath called you is holy, so *be ye holy* in all manner of conversation; because it is

written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:1-2,15-16). Think of the incongruity here if sanctification and holiness refer to an inward work whereby inbred sin is rooted out of one’s being. The sanctified are exhorted to be holy, in place of being informed that already they have been made absolutely that, and therefore need no such exhortation.

(12) The sanctified are nevertheless declared to be perfected forever. “For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14). Who among the perfectionists can explain this satisfactorily? Nothing is commoner among the teachers of this school than the doctrine of the possibility of the ultimate falling away and final loss of those who have been justified, sanctified, and have enjoyed the most marvelous experiences; yet here the sanctified are said to be forever perfected — consequently shall never be lost, nor ever lose that sanctification which they have once been the objects of.

After carefully hearing these twelve witnesses, I ask my readers, Can you possibly gather from these varied uses of the word “sanctification” any hint of a change of nature in the believer, or an elimination of evil implied therein? I feel certain that every candid mind must confess the word evidently has a very different meaning, and I design briefly to point out what that meaning is.

Freed from all theological accretions, the naked verb “to sanctify” means *to set apart*, and the noun “sanctification” means, literally, *separation*. This simple key will unlock every verse we have been considering, and bring all into harmony where discord seemed complete.

The vessels of the tabernacle were separated for divine service, even as Mount Sinai was set apart to Jehovah for the giving of the law. The priests in Israel separated

themselves from their defilement. Moses separated the people from uncleanness, and set apart the firstborn as dedicated to Jehovah. The apostates in Isaiah's day set themselves apart, on the contrary, to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord. The Father set the Son apart to become the Saviour of the lost; and at the end of His life on earth, His work accomplished, the Lord Jesus separated Himself and ascended to glory, there to become the object of His people's hearts, that they might thus be set apart from the world that had refused and crucified their Redeemer. The unbelieving wife or husband, if linked with a saved life-partner set apart to God, is thereby put in an external relation to God, with its privileges and responsibility; and the children are likewise separated from those who never come under the sound of the truth. All Christians, whatever their actual state, be they carnal or spiritual, are nevertheless separated to God in Christ Jesus; and from this springs the responsibility to live for Him.

This separation is to be followed daily, the believer seeking to become more and more conformed to Christ. Persons professing to be Christians and not following sanctification, will not see the Lord; for they are unreal, and have no divine life. The Lord God must be set apart in our hearts if our testimony is to count for His glory. One may be set apart to God in Christ, and yet need exhortation to a practical separation from all uncleanness and worldliness. And, lastly, all so set apart are in God's sight perfected forever, as to the conscience, by the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross; for they are accepted in the Beloved, and eternally linked up with Him. Get the key, and every difficulty vanishes. Sanctification, in the Christian sense, is therefore twofold — absolute and progressive.

# Sanctification by the Holy Spirit: Internal

In closing the last chapter I remarked that sanctification is both absolute and progressive. Absolute sanctification is by the one offering of Christ on the cross, and will be treated of further on. Progressive sanctification is looked at in two ways: it is by the Spirit and by the Word.

It may help some to put it in this way: Sanctification by the Spirit is **INTERNAL**. It is an experience within the believer. Sanctification by the blood of Christ is **ETERNAL**. It is *not* an experience; it is *positional*; it has to do with the new place in God's eternal favor occupied by every believer — an unchanging and unchangeable position, to which defilement can never attach, in God's estimation.

Sanctification by the Word of God refers to the believer's outward walk and ways. It is the manifest result of sanctification by the Spirit, and goes on progressively all through life.

I desire to group together four scriptures which refer to the first important aspect above mentioned. Doctrinally, perhaps, I should take up sanctification by blood first; but experimentally the Spirit's work precedes the knowledge of the other.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 we read of a host of sinful characters who shall not inherit the kingdom of God. The 11th verse immediately adds, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but *ye are sanctified*, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and *by the Spirit* of our God."

Again, in 2 Thessalonians 2:13 we read, "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation *through sanctification of the Spirit* and belief of the truth."

Closely linked with this is the second verse of the opening chapter of First Peter: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, *through sanctification of the Spirit*, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

The fourth verse is Romans 15:16: "That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being *sanctified by the Holy Spirit*."

In all these passages it is of the utmost importance, in order to rightly apprehend the truth intended to be conveyed, to observe that sanctification by the Spirit is treated as the first beginnings of God's work in the souls of

men, leading to the full knowledge of justification through faith in the blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ.

Far from being “the second blessing,” subsequent to justification, it is a work apart from which none ever would be saved. That this may be made plain to the thoughtful reader, I purpose a careful analysis of each verse quoted.

The Corinthians had been characterized by the common sins of men. They had, like the Ephesians (Eph. 2:1-5), “walked according to the course of this world,” lured on by that unholy “spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience.” But a great change had taken place in them. Old affections and desires had been superseded by new and holy longings. The wicked life had been exchanged for one in which the pursuit after godliness was characteristic. What had wrought this change? Three expressions are used to convey the fulness of it. They had been “washed, sanctified, and justified” — and all “in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” Objective and subjective are here closely linked together. The work and character of the Lord Jesus had been presented as set forth in the gospel. He alone was the Saviour of sinners. But in the application of that salvation to men there is necessarily the subjective side. Men are unclean because of sin, and must be “washed.” The “washing of water by the word” (Eph. 5:25-26) is clearly alluded to. The Word of God lays hold on the conscience, and men are awakened to see the folly and wickedness of their lives — away from God, and walking in darkness. This is the beginning of a moral washing that goes on all through the believer’s life, and of which I hope to treat more fully later on.

But now, observe carefully — the same Word of God comes to all men, but the same effect is not produced in

all. Christ and His cross is preached to an audience of a hundred unconverted men. One remains, broken-hearted over his sins and seeking peace with God, while ninety and nine go away untouched. Why the difference? The Holy Spirit gives power to the Word, plowing up the conscience in the case of every one truly converted, and such a one is separated, set apart by a divine work within, from the indifferent multitude to which he once belonged. It is here that sanctification of the Spirit applies. It may be some time before he finds true peace with God; but he is never again a careless sinner. The Holy Spirit has laid hold of him for salvation. This is beautifully illustrated in the first few verses of our Bibles. The world created in perfection (see Isa. 45:18) in verse 1 is described as fallen into a chaotic condition in verse 2. "Without form, and void," and covered with a mantle of darkness: what a picture of fallen man away from God! His soul a moral chaos, his understanding darkened, his mind and conscience defiled, he is in very deed dead in trespasses and sins; "alienated and an enemy in his mind by wicked works." All this the ruined earth may well speak of.

But God is going to remake that world. It shall yet become a dwelling-place for man, a fit home for him during the ages of time. How does He go about it? The first great agent is the Spirit; the second, the Word. "The Spirit of God moved [or brooded] upon the face of the waters." Hovering over that scene of desolation, the Holy Spirit brooded; and then the Word of power went forth. "God said, Let there be light: and there was light." And so in the salvation of fallen man — the Spirit and the Word must act. The brooding-time comes first. The Holy Spirit quickens through the message proclaimed. He awakens

men, and gives them a desire to know Christ and to be delivered from sin's power and saved from its judgment. After this brooding season, or as a result of it, the heart is opened to the gospel in its fulness; and, being believed, the light shines in and the darkness is dissipated. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). Thus are we who believe no longer children of the night, nor of darkness, but of the day. We were once darkness: now we have become light in the Lord. But before the shining forth of the light there was the Spirit's brooding. And this is the sanctification referred to in the four passages grouped together above. Notice the order in 2 Thessalonians 2: "Chosen ... to salvation *through* sanctification of the Spirit" — the divine agency — "and belief of the truth" — the Word of life scattering the darkness and bringing in the light of the knowledge of salvation through the name of the Lord Jesus.

It is the same in 1 Peter. The saved are elect, but it is the sanctification of the Spirit that brings them *unto* the obedience and blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ. Now the knowledge of justification is mine when brought by the Spirit to the knowledge of the sprinkled blood of Jesus. It is faith apprehending that His precious blood cleanseth my soul from every stain, thus giving peace. By the Spirit I am brought to this, and to begin a life of obedience — to obey as Christ obeyed. This is the practical effect of the Spirit's sanctification.

But now it is of importance to realize that justification is not in itself a state. It is not a work in the soul, but a work done by Another for me, yet altogether outside of me, and

utterly apart from my frames and feelings. In other words, it is my standing, not my experience.

The difference between the two may be illustrated thus: Two men are haled into court charged with the joint commission of a crime. After a full investigation, the judge on the bench justifies them both. They are free. One man, hearing the decision, is filled with delight. He had feared an opposite verdict, and dreaded the consequences. But now he is happy, because he knows he is cleared. The other man was even more anxious and gloomy. So occupied is he with his troubled thoughts that he does not fully catch the declaration of the court, "Not guilty." He hears only the last word, and he is filled with dismay. He sees a loathsome prison rising before him, yet he knows he is innocent. He gives utterance to words of despair until with difficulty made to comprehend the true status of the case, when he too is filled with joy.

Now what had the actual justification of either man to do with his state, or experience? The one who heard and believed was happy. The one who misapprehended the decision was miserable; yet both were alike justified. Justification was not a work wrought in them. It was the judge's sentence in their favor. And this is always what justification is, whether used in the Bible or in matters of everyday life. God justifies, or clears, the ungodly when they believe in the Lord Jesus who bore their condemnation on the cross. To confound this judicial act with the state of soul of the believer is only confusion.

"But," says one, "I do not *feel* justified!" Justification has nothing to do with feeling. The question is, do you believe God is satisfied with His beloved Son as your substitute upon the cross, and do you receive Jesus as your

substitute — your personal Saviour? If so, God says you are justified; and there is an end to it. He will not call back His words. Believing the gospel declaration, the soul has peace with God. Walking with God, there is joy and gladness, and victory over sin in a practical sense. But this is *state*, not standing.

The Holy Spirit who quickens and sanctifies at the beginning, leading to the knowledge of justification through faith in what God has said about the blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ, abides now in every believer, to be the power for the new life, and thus for practical sanctification day by day.

In this way the offering-up of the Gentiles — poor aliens, heathen of all descriptions, strangers to the covenants of promise — is made acceptable to God, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. He accompanies the preaching — the ministry of reconciliation — opening the heart to the truth, convincing of sin, of righteousness and judgment, and leading to personal faith in the Son of God.

I think it must now be plain to any who have carefully followed me thus far that in this aspect at least sanctification is wrongly designated as a “second blessing.” It is, on the contrary, the beginning of the work of the Spirit in the soul, and goes on throughout the believer’s life, reaching its consummation at the coming of the Lord, when the saved one, in his glorified, sinless body, will be presented faultless in the presence of God. And so Peter, after telling the Christians to whom he writes that they are sanctified by the Spirit, very properly proceeds to exhort them to be holy because He who has saved them is holy, and they are set to represent Him in this world.

So too Paul, after affirming the sanctification of the Thessalonians, yet prays that they may be sanctified wholly, which would be an absurdity if this were accomplished when first sanctified by the Spirit. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:23-24). There is no room for doubt as to the final result. Sanctification is God's work; and "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever" (Eccl. 3:14). "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

When asked for scripture as to the term "the second blessing," the perfectionist will generally refer you to 2 Corinthians 1:15. There Paul writes to the Corinthians (who, as declared several times over in his first epistle, were sanctified), and says, "In this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit." The margin reads, "a second blessing." From this simple expression, an amazing system has been deduced. It is taught that as a result of Paul's first visit to Corinth many had been justified. But as the carnal mind remained in them, they manifested it in various ways, for which he rebukes them in his first letter. Now he longs to get to them again, this time not so much to preach the gospel as to have some "holiness meetings," and get them sanctified!

An ingenious theory surely! but it all falls to the ground when the student of Scripture observes that the carnal saints of the first epistle were sanctified in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:2); had received the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:12); were indwelt by that Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16); and, as we have already noticed at some length, were "washed ... sanctified ... justified in

the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6).

What then was the second blessing Paul desired for them? To begin with, it was not *the* second blessing at all, but *a* second blessing. They had been blessed by his ministry among them on the first occasion, as they learned from his lips and saw manifested in his ways the truth of God. Like any true-hearted under-shepherd, he longs to visit them again, once more to minister among them, that they may receive blessing, or benefit, a second time. What could be simpler, if the mind were not confused by faulty teaching, leading to one’s reading his thoughts into Scripture, instead of learning from it?

From the moment of their conversion, believers are “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,” and the Spirit is given to lead us into the good that is already ours. “All things are yours” was written, not to persons perfect in their ways, but to the very Corinthians whom we have been considering, and that before they received, through the Apostle Paul, a second benefit.



# **Sanctification by the Blood of Christ: Eternal**

The great theme of the epistle to the Hebrews is that aspect of sanctification which has been designated positional, or absolute; not now a work wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit, but the glorious result of that wondrous work accomplished by the Son of God when He offered up Himself to put away sin upon the cross of Calvary. By virtue of that sacrifice the believer is forever set apart to God, his conscience purged, and he himself transformed from an unclean sinner into a holy worshipper, linked up in an abiding relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ; for “both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb. 2:11). According to 1 Corinthians

1:30, they are “in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us ... sanctification.” They are “accepted in the Beloved.” God sees them in Him, and looks at them as He looks at His Son. “As He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17). This is not our state. No believer has ever been wholly like the Lord Jesus in a practical way. The highest and best experience would not reach up to this. But as to our standing (our new position), we are reckoned by God to be “as He is.”

The basis of all this is the blood-shedding and blood-sprinkling of our Saviour. “Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate” (Heb. 13:12). By no other means could we be purged from our sins and set apart to God.

The main argument of the epistle is very fully developed in chapters 8 to 10, inclusive. There the two covenants are contrasted. The old covenant asked of man what it never got — that is perfect obedience; because it was not in man to give it. The new covenant guarantees all blessing through the work of Another; and from the knowledge of this springs the desire to obey on the part of the object of such grace.

In the old dispensation there was a sanctuary of an earthly order; and connected with it were ordinances of a carnal character, which nevertheless foreshadowed good things to come — the very blessings we are now privileged to enter into the enjoyment of.

But in the tabernacle God had shut Himself away from sinful man, and He dwelt in the holiest of all. Man was shut out. Once only every year a representative man, the high priest, went in to God, but “not without blood.” Every great day of atonement the same ritual service was

performed; but all the sacrifices offered under the law could not put away one sin, or “make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.”

The perfection of Hebrews, let it be noted, is not perfection of character or of experience, but perfection as to the *conscience*. That is, the great question taken up is, How can a polluted sinner, with a defiled conscience, procure a conscience that no longer accuses him, but now permits him unhinderedly to approach God? The blood of bulls and of goats cannot effect this. Legal works cannot procure so precious a boon. The proof of it is manifest in Israel’s history, for the continual sacrifices proved that no sacrifice sufficient to purge the conscience had yet been offered. “For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins” (Heb. 10:2).

How little do holiness professors enter into words like these! “Once purged!” “No more conscience of sins!” What do such expressions mean? Something which, if but grasped by Christians generally, would free them from all their questionings, doubts, and fears.

The legal sacrifices were not great enough in value to atone for sin. This having been fully attested, Christ Himself came to do the will of God, as it was written in the volume of the book. Doing that will meant for Him going down into death and pouring out His blood for our salvation: “By the which will we *are sanctified* through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10). Observe, then, that our sanctification and His one offering stand or fall together. We believe the record, and God declares “we are sanctified.” There is no growth, no progress, and certainly no second work, in this. It is a

great *fact*, true of all Christians. And this sanctification is eternal in character, because our great Priest's work is done perfectly, and is never to be repeated, as the following verses insist: "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). Could words be plainer or language more expressive? He who doubts shows himself either unwilling or afraid to rest on so startling a truth!

That *one* true sacrifice effectually purges the conscience once for all, so that the intelligent believer can now rejoice in the assurance that he is forever cleansed from his guilt and defilement by the blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ. Thus, and thus only, the sanctified are perfected forever, as regards the conscience.

A simple illustration may help any who still have difficulty as to this expression, peculiar to Hebrews, "a purged conscience." A man is in debt to another who has again and again demanded payment. Being unable to pay, and that because he has unwisely wasted his substance, and this known to his creditor, he becomes unhappy when in the latter's presence. A desire to avoid him springs up and takes control of him. His conscience is uneasy and defiled. He knows well he is blameworthy, yet he is incapable of righting matters. But another appears, who, on the debtor's behalf, settles the claim in the fullest manner, and hands to the troubled one a receipt for all. Is he now afraid to meet the other? Does he shrink from facing him? Not at all; and why? Because he has now a perfect, or a purged, conscience in regard to the matter that once exercised him.

It is thus that the work of the Lord Jesus has met all God's righteous claims against the sinner; and the believer, resting upon the divine testimony as to the value of that work, is purged by the blood of Christ and "perfected for

ever” in the sight of the Holy One. He is sanctified by that blood, and that for eternity.

Having been turned from the power of Satan unto God, he has the forgiveness of sins, and is assured of an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus (Acts 26:18).

But there is an expression used farther on in the chapter that may still perplex and bewilder those who have not apprehended that profession is one thing, and possession another. In order to be clear as to this, it will be necessary to examine the whole passage, which I therefore quote in full, italicizing the expression referred to. “For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and *hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified*, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (Heb. 10:26-29).

In what we have already gone over we have seen that he who is sanctified by the one offering of Christ upon the cross, that is, by His precious blood, is perfected forever. But in this passage it is equally plain that one who counts the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, shall be forever lost. In order not to miss the true force of this for our souls, it is necessary that we give some attention to what we have already designated “positional sanctification.” Of old all the people of Israel, and all who were associated with them, were set apart to

God both on the night of the Passover and afterwards in the wilderness. But this did not necessarily imply a work of the Spirit in their souls. Many were doubtless in the blood-sprinkled houses that solemn night, when the destroying angel passed through to smite the unsheltered firstborn, who had no real faith in God. Yet they were by the blood of the Lamb put in a place of blessing, a position where they shared in many hallowed privileges. So afterward with those who were under the cloud and passed through the sea, being baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. All were in the same position. All shared the same outward blessings. But the wilderness was the place of testing, and soon proved who were real and who were not.

At the present time God has no special nation, to be allied to which is to come into a position of outward nearness to Him. But He has a people who have been redeemed to Himself out of all kindreds and tongues and peoples and nations, by the precious blood of the Lamb of God. All who ally themselves by profession with that company are outwardly among the blood-sheltered: in this sense they are sanctified by the blood of the covenant. That blood stands for Christianity, which in its very essence is the proclamation of salvation through Christ's atoning death. To take the Christian place therefore is like entering the blood-sprinkled house. All who are real, who have judged themselves before God, and truly confided in His grace, will remain in that house. If any go out, it proves their unreality, and such can find no other sacrifice for sins; for all the typical offerings are done away in Christ. These are they of whom the Apostle John speaks so solemnly: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they

had been of us, they would<sup>3</sup> have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 John 2:19). These unreal ones were positionally sanctified; but as they were always bereft of faith in the soul, they "went out," and thus did despite to the Spirit of grace, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing. These sin willfully, not in the sense of failing to walk uprightly merely, but as utterly abjuring, or apostatizing from, Christianity, after having become conversant with the glorious message it brings to lost men.

But where it is otherwise, and the soul is really resting on Christ, positional sanctification becomes eternal: because the sanctified and the Sanctifier are, as we have seen, linked up together by an indissoluble bond. Christ Himself is made unto them wisdom, and this in a threefold way: He is their righteousness, their sanctification, and their redemption.

Here is holiness! Here is an unassailable righteousness! Here is acceptance with God. "Ye are complete in Him," though daily needing to humble oneself because of failure. It is not my practical sanctification that gives me title to a place among the saints in light. It is the glorious fact that Christ has died and redeemed me to God. His blood has cleansed me from all, or every, sin; and I now have life in Him, a new life, with which guilt can never be connected. I am in Him that is true. He is my sanctification, and represents me before God, even as of old the high priest bore upon his mitre the words "Holiness unto the Lord,"

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3 The italicized addition, "no doubt," is superfluous. The passage is complete without it. It is a positive statement, and admits of no exception.

## Holiness

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and upon his shoulders and his heart the names of all the tribes of Israel. He represented them all in the holy place. He was typically their sanctification. If he was accepted of God, so were they. The people were seen in the priest.

And of our ever-living High Priest we may well sing:

*“For us He wears the mitre  
Where holiness shines bright;  
For us His robes are whiter  
Than heaven’s unsullied light.”*

That there should be a life of corresponding devotedness and separation to God on our part no Spirit-taught believer will for a moment deny, as we will now consider.

## **Sanctification by the Word of God: External Results**

In His great high-priestly prayer of the 17th of John, our Lord says of the men given to Him by the Father, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John 17:16-19). This precious passage may well introduce for us the subject of practical sanctification — the ordering aright of our external ways, and bringing all into accord with the revealed will of God.

At the outset we shall do well if we get it fixed in our mind that this is very closely related to that sanctification of

the Spirit to which our attention has already been directed. The Spirit works within us. The Word, which is without us, is nevertheless the medium used to do the work within. But I have purposely dwelt separately upon the two aspects in order to bring the clearer before our minds the distinction between the Spirit's sanctification in us, which is the very beginning of God's work in our souls, and the application of the Word thereafter to our outward ways. New birth is our introduction into God's family; but although born again, we may be dark as to many things, and need the light of the Word to clear our bewildered minds. But through the sanctification of the Spirit we are brought to the blood of sprinkling: we apprehend that Christ's atoning death alone avails for our sins. We are sanctified by the blood of Christ, and able to appreciate our new position before God. It is now that in its true sense the walk of faith begins, and thereafter we need daily that sanctification by the truth, or the word of God, spoken of by our Lord.

It is evident that in the very nature of things this cannot be what some have ignorantly called "a second definite work of grace." It is, on the contrary, a *life* — a progressive work ever going on, and which ever must go on, until I have passed out of the scene in which I need daily instruction as to my ways, which the Word of God alone can give. If sanctification in its practical sense be by the Word, I shall never be wholly sanctified, in this aspect of it, until I know that Word perfectly, and am violating it in no particular. And that will never be true here upon earth. Here I always need to feed upon that Word, to understand it better, to learn more fully its meaning; and as I learn from it the mind of God, I am called daily to judge in myself all that is contrary to the increased light I receive, and to yield today

a fuller obedience than yesterday. Thus am I sanctified by the truth.

For this very purpose the Lord has sanctified or set Himself apart. He has gone up to heaven, there to watch over His own, to be our High Priest with God in view of our weakness, and our Advocate with the Father in view of our sins. He is there too as the object of our hearts. We are called now to run our race with patience, looking unto Jesus, with the Holy Spirit within us and the Word in our hands, to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. As we value it, and are controlled by its precious truth made good to us in the Spirit's power, we are sanctified by God the Father and by our Lord Jesus Himself. For in the 17th of John He makes request of the *Father*, "Sanctify them through Thy truth." In Ephesians 5:25-26 we read, "*Christ* also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that *He* might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word." Here it is Christ who is the sanctifier, for He could always say, "I and the Father are one." Here, as in John, sanctification is plainly progressive; and, indeed, that water-washing of Ephesians is beautifully illustrated in an earlier chapter of John — the 13th. There we have our Lord, in the full consciousness of His eternal Sonship, taking the place of a girded servant to wash His disciples' feet. Washing the feet is indicative of cleansing the ways; and the whole passage is a symbolical picture of the work in which He has been engaged ever since ascending to heaven. He has been keeping the feet of His saints by cleansing them from the defilement of the way — those earth-stains which are so readily contracted by sandaled pilgrim-feet pressing along this world's highways.

He says to each of us, as to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." Part *in* Him we have on the ground of His atoning work and as a result of the life He gives. Part *with* Him, or daily communion, is only ours as sanctified by the water of the Word.

That the whole scene was allegorical is evident by His words to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Literal feet-washing Peter knew and understood. Spiritual feet-washing he learned when restored by the Lord after his lamentable fall. Then he entered into the meaning of the words, "He that is *bathed*<sup>4</sup> needeth not save to *wash* his feet, but is clean every whit." The meaning is not hard to grasp. Every believer is bathed once for all in the "bath of regeneration" (Titus 3:5, literal rendering). That bathing is never repeated. None born of God can ever perish, for all such have a life that is eternal, and consequently non-forfeitable (John 10:27-29). If they fail and sin, they do not need to be saved over again. That would mean, to be bathed once more. But he that is bathed needs not to have it all done again because his feet get defiled. He washes them and is clean.

So it is with Christians. We have been regenerated *once*, and never shall be a second time. But every time we fail we need to judge ourselves by the Word, that we may be cleansed as to our ways; and where we daily give that Word its rightful place in our lives, we shall be kept from defilement and enabled to enjoy unclouded communion with our Lord and Saviour. "Wherewithal," asks the psalmist, "shall a young man cleanse his way?" And the answer is, "By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word."

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4 As many now know, this word means a complete bath, and differs from the word used later for "wash" in the same verse.

How necessary it is then to search the Scriptures, and to obey them unquestioningly, in order that we may be sanctified by the truth! Yet what indifference is often found among professors of a “second blessing” as to this very thing! What ignorance of the Scriptures, and what fancied superiority to them, is frequently manifested! — and that coupled with a profession of holiness in the flesh!

In 1 Thessalonians 4:3 there is a passage which, divorced from its context, is often considered decisive as proving that it is possible for believers to attain to a state of absolute freedom from inbred sin in this world: “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” Who can deny my title to perfect holiness if sanctification means that, and it is God’s will for me? Surely none. But already we have seen that sanctification never means that, and in the present text least of all. Read the entire first eight verses, forming a complete paragraph, and see for yourself. The subject is personal purity. The sanctification spoken of is keeping the body from unclean practices, and the mind from lasciviousness.

Grossest immorality was connected with, and even formed part of idolatrous worship. The Greek mythology had deified the passions of fallen man; and these Thessalonian Christians had but just “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” Hence the special need of this exhortation to saints newly converted, and who were living among those who shamelessly practiced all these things. But think of calling for this upon men freed from inbred sin! And the saints, as God’s temple are to be characterized by a clean life, not by a life polluted by fleshly lusts.

Another aspect of this practical sanctification is brought before us in 2 Timothy 2:19-22. We might call it ecclesiastical sanctification; for it has in view the faithful believer's stand in a day when corruption has come in among professing Christians, and the church as a whole, viewed in its character as the house of God, has fallen, and become as a great house in which good and evil are all mixed up together. It is a matter of most solemn import that, whereas here and elsewhere in Scripture he who would walk with God is called to separate himself from unholy associations and the fellowship of the mixed multitude, even though it be found in what calls itself the church, yet there are large numbers, who testify to "living without sin," who nevertheless are united in church (and often other forms of) fellowship with unbelievers and professing Christians who are unholy in walk and unsound as to the faith. For the sake of such it will be well to examine the passage in detail. As I penned a paper on this subject some time ago (published in *Help and Food* for August, 1910, under the title "From what are we called to purge ourselves in 2 Timothy 2?"), I have largely availed myself of what was then written, in the following paragraph.

The Apostle has been directing Timothy's attention to the evidences of increasing apostasy. He warns against striving about words (2 Tim. 2:14), profane and vain babblings (2 Tim. 2:16); and points out two men, Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim. 2:17), who have given themselves over to these unholy speculations, and have thereby, though accepted by many as Christian teachers, overthrown the faith of some. And this is but the beginning, as the next chapter shows, for "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13).

Now I apprehend that the first verse of chapter 3 follows verse 18 of chapter 2 in an orderly, connected manner. The apostle sees in Hymenaeus and Philetus the beginning of the awful harvest of iniquity soon to nearly smother everything that is of God. Go on with these men, listen to them, fellowship them, endorse them in any way, and you will soon lose all ability to discern between good and evil, to “take forth the precious from the vile.”

But before depicting the full character of the rapidly encroaching conditions, Timothy is given a word for his encouragement, and instruction as to his own path when things reach a state where it is impossible longer to purge out the evil from the visible church.

“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord<sup>5</sup> depart from iniquity [or, lawlessness]” (2 Tim. 2:19). Here is faith’s encouragement, and here too is the responsibility of faithfulness. Faith says, “Let the evil rise as high as it may — let lawlessness abound, and the love of many wax cold — let all that seemed to be of God in the earth be swallowed up in the apostasy — nevertheless God’s firm foundation stands, for Christ has declared, ‘Upon this rock I will build My Assembly, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it’”!

But this brings in responsibility. I am not to go on with the evil — protesting, perhaps, but fellowshipping it still — though it be in a reserved, halfhearted way. I am called to separate from it. In so doing I may seem to be separating from dear children of God and beloved servants

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5 See the Revised. It is the acknowledgement of the Lordship of Christ.

of Christ. But this is necessary if they do not judge the apostate condition.

To make clear my responsibility an illustration is given in 2 Timothy 2:20: "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor." The "great house" is Christendom in its present condition, where good and evil, saved and lost, holy and unholy, are all mixed up together. In 1 Timothy 3:15 we read of "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." This is what the church should always have been. But, alas, it soon drifted away from so blessed an ideal, and became like a great man's house in which are found all kinds of vessels, composed of very different materials, and for very different uses. There are golden and silver vessels for use in the dining-room; and there are vessels of wood and earth, used in the kitchen and other parts of the house, often allowed to become exceedingly filthy, and at best to be kept at a distance from the valuable, and easily scratched or polluted, plate upstairs.

"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim 2:21). The parable is here applied. The vessels are seen to be *persons*. And just as valuable plates might stand uncleansed and dirty with a lot of kitchen utensils waiting to be washed, and then carefully separated from the vessels for baser uses, so Timothy (and every other truly exercised soul) is called upon to take a place apart, to "purge out himself" from the mixed conditions, that he may be in very deed "a vessel unto honor, *sanctified*, and meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work."

Unquestionably this sanctification is very different from the Spirit's work in the soul at the beginning, or the effect of the work of Christ on the cross, by which we are set apart to God eternally. It is a practical thing, relating to the question of our associations as Christians. Let me follow out the illustration a step further, and I think all will be plain.

The master of the great house brings home a friend. He wishes to serve him with a refreshing drink. He goes to the sideboard looking for a silver goblet, but there is none to be seen. A servant is called, and inquiry made. Ah, the goblets are down in the kitchen waiting to be washed and separated from the rest of the household vessels.

He is indignantly dispatched to procure one, and soon returns with a vessel purged out from the unclean collection below; and thus separated and cleansed it is meet for the use of the master.

And so it is with the man of God who has thus purged himself out from what is opposed to the truth and the holiness of God. He is sanctified, or separated, and in this way becomes "meet for the Master's use."

Of course it is not enough to stop with separation. To do so would make one a Pharisee of the most disgusting type; as has, alas, often been the case. But he who has separated from the evil is now commanded to "flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." To do this, what need there is of the daily application of the Word of God, in the Spirit's power, to all our ways!

And this, as we have seen, is true feet-washing. Through the Word we are made clean at new birth. "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you"

(John 15:3). That Word is likened to water because of its purifying and refreshing effect upon the one who submits to it. In it I find instruction as to every detail of the walk of faith. It shows me how I am called to behave in the family, in the church, and in the world. If I obey it the defilement is washed out of my life; even as the application of water cleanses my body from material pollution.

Never shall I attain so exalted a state or experience upon earth that I can honestly say: Now I am wholly sanctified; I no longer need the Word to cleanse me. As long as I am in this scene I am called to "*Follow* peace with all men, and holiness (or, sanctification), without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). This one passage, rightly understood, cuts up by the roots the entire perfectionist theory; yet no verse is more frequently quoted, or rather misquoted, in holiness meetings!

Observe carefully what is here commanded: We are to *follow* two things: peace with all men, and holiness. He who does not follow these will never see the Lord. But we do not follow that to which we have attained. Who has attained to peace with all men? How many have to cry with the psalmist, "I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war"! (Psa. 120:7). And who have attained to holiness in the full sense? Not you, nor I; for "in many things we offend all" (James 3:2). But every real believer, every truly converted soul, everyone who has received the Spirit of adoption, does *follow* holiness, and longs for the time when, at the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ, "He shall change these bodies of our humiliation," and make them like "the body of His glory." Then we shall have reached our goal: then we shall have become absolutely and forever holy.

And so when the Apostle writes to the Thessalonians, in view of that glorious event, he says: “Abstain from all appearance [every form] of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto [or, in] the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 Thess. 5:22-24). This will be the glad consummation for all who here on earth, as strangers and pilgrims, follow peace and holiness, and thus manifest the divine nature and the fruits of the Spirit.

But so long as they remain in the wilderness of this world they will need daily recourse to the laver of water — the cleansing Word of God — which of old stood midway between the altar and the holy place. When all are gathered home in heaven the water will no longer be needed to free from defilement. In that scene of holiness therefore there is no laver; but before the throne John saw a sea of glass, clear as crystal, upon which the redeemed were standing, their trials and their warfare over.

So throughout eternity we shall rest upon the Word of God as a crystal sea, no longer needed for our sanctification, for we shall be presented faultless in the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

*“Then we shall be where we would be;  
Then we shall be what we should be;  
Things that are not now, nor could be,  
Then shall be our own.”*



## Relative Sanctification

Nothing more clearly establishes the proposition we have been insisting on throughout — that sanctification is not the eradication of our sinful nature — than the way the word is used relatively, where it is positively certain there is no work of any sort contemplated as having taken place in the soul of the sanctified. Having carefully considered the absolute and practical aspects of sanctification, without which all profession is unreal, it may now be profitable to weigh what God has to say of this merely outward, or relative, holiness.

Already, in the chapter on sanctification by blood, we have seen that a person may in a certain sense be sanctified by association and yet all the time be unreal, only to become an apostate at last.

It is also true that in another sense people are said to be sanctified by association who are the subjects of earnest, prayerful yearning, and may yet — and in all probability will — be truly saved. But they are sanctified before this, and in view of it.

The seventh chapter of First Corinthians is the passage which must now occupy us. It contains the fullest instruction as to the marriage relation that we have in the Bible. Beginning with 1 Corinthians 7:10, we read, “And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.” As to this, the Lord had already given explicit instruction, as recorded in Matthew 19:1-12.

But owing to the spread of the gospel among the heathen of the Gentiles a condition had arisen in many places which the words of the Lord did not seem fully to meet, having been spoken, as they were, to the people of the Jews, separated as a whole to Jehovah. The question that soon began to agitate the church was this: Suppose a case (and there were many such) where a heathen wife is converted to God but her husband remains an unclean idolater, or vice versa; can the Christian partner remain in the marriage relationship with the unconverted spouse and not be defiled? To a Jew the very thought of such a condition was an offense. In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah certain of the returned remnant had taken wives of the surrounding mixed nations, and the result was confusion. “Their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews’ language, but according to the language of each people” (Neh. 13:24). This state of things

was abhorrent to the godly leaders, who did not rest until all the strange wives had been put away, and with them the children, who were considered likewise unclean, and a menace to the purity of Israel.

With only the Old Testament in their hands, who could have wondered at it if some zealous, well-meaning legalists from Jerusalem had gone like firebrands through the Gentile assemblies preaching a crusade against all contamination of this kind, and breaking up households on every hand, counseling converted husbands to cast out their heathen wives and disown their children as the product of an unclean relationship, and urging Christian wives to flee from the embraces of idolatrous husbands, and, at whatever cost to the affections, to forsake their offspring, as a supreme sacrifice to the God of holiness?

It was to prevent just such a state of affairs that the verses that follow those we have already considered were penned by inspiration of the God of all grace. Concerning this anomalous state the Lord had not spoken, as the time had not come to do so. Therefore Paul writes: "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the *unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife*, and the *unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband*: else were your children unclean; but *now are they holy* [or, sanctified]. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how

knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife” (1 Cor. 7:12-16).

What an example have we here of the transcendent power of grace! Under law the unclean partner defiled the sanctified one. Under grace the one whom God has saved sanctifies the unclean.

The family is a divine institution, older than the nations, older than Israel, older than the church. What is here, and elsewhere in Scripture, clearly indicates that it is the will of God to save His people as households. He would not do violence to the ties of nature which He Himself has created. If he saves a man who is head of a household, He thereby indicates that for the entire family He has blessing in store. This does not touch individual responsibility. Salvation, it is ever true, is “not of blood”; but it is, generally speaking, God’s thought to deliver His people’s households with themselves. So he declares that the salvation of one parent sanctifies the other, and the children too are sanctified.

Is it that any change has taken place *within* these persons? Not at all. They may still be utterly unregenerate, loving only their evil ways, despising the grace and fearing not the judgment of God. But they are nevertheless sanctified!

How does this agree with the perfectionists’ view of sanctification? as it is evident the word here cannot mean an inward cleansing, his system falls to the ground. The fact is, he has attached an arbitrary meaning to it, which is etymologically incorrect, Scripturally untrue, and experimentally false.

In the case now occupying us, the sanctification is clearly and wholly *relative*. The position of the rest of the family is changed by the conversion of one parent. That is no longer

a heathen home in God's sight, but a Christian one. That household no longer dwells in the darkness, but in the light. Do not misunderstand me here. I am not speaking of light and darkness as implying spiritual capacity or incapacity. I am referring to outward responsibility.

In a heathen home all is darkness; there is no light shining whatever. But let one parent of that family be converted to God; what then? At once a candlestick is set up in that house which, whether they will or no, enlightens every other member. They are put in a place of privilege and responsibility to which they have been strangers hitherto. And all this with no work of God, as yet, in their souls, but simply in view of such a work. For the conversion of that one parent was God's way of announcing His gracious desires for the whole family; even as in the jailer's case He caused His servants to declare, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." The last few words do not guarantee salvation to the household, but they at once fix upon the jailer's heart the fact that the same way is open for the salvation of his house as for himself, and that God would have him count upon Him for this. They were sanctified the moment he believed, and soon rejoicing filled the whole house, when all responded to the grace proclaimed. (I desire heartily to commend here an excellent work on this subject by the late beloved C. H. Mackintosh, *Thou and thy House*.)

This, then, is, in brief, the teaching of Holy Scripture as to relative sanctification — a theme often overlooked or ignored, but of deep solemnity and importance to Christian members of families of whom some are still unsaved. "What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether

thou shalt save thy wife?" Labor on; pray on; live Christ before the rest from day to day, knowing that through you God has sanctified them, and is waiting to save them when they see their need and trust His grace.

I cannot pursue this theme more at length here, as to do so would divert attention from the main theme that is before us; but I trust that the most simple and uninstructed of my readers can now perceive that sanctification and sinlessness must in the very nature of the case be opposing terms.

And with this chapter I bring to an end my examination of the use of the actual term sanctification in Scripture. But this by no means exhausts the subject. There are other terms still to be examined, the meaning of which the perfectionists consider to be synonymous with it, and to teach their favorite theory of the entire destruction of the carnal mind in the sanctified. These will be taken up, the Lord willing, in a few more chapters in continuance.

## Dead to Sin, and Perfect Love

What is it to be dead with Christ, dead to sin and to the rudiments of the world? Upon the answer to this question hangs the truth or error of the perfectionist system.

In commencing our inquiry I would remind the reader of what we have already looked at (in chapter 2) as to the distinction between standing and state. *Standing* has reference to what I am as viewed by God through the work of His Son. *State* is my actual condition of soul. “That I also may be of good comfort,” says Paul, “when I know your *state*.” He speaks elsewhere of “this grace wherein ye *stand*.” The two things are very different.

Death with Christ has to do with my standing. “Reckon yourself dead” refers to my state. It should readily be apprehended that no one but the thieves on the cross ever died *with* Christ actually, and one of them was lost. Thomas

on one occasion said, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." He referred to a literal death with Lazarus and with Christ, for whom to go into Judaea seemed to the disciples to be imperiling His life.

But Christ is now living in glory; and it is nineteen hundred years too late for anyone to die *with* Him, so far as experience is concerned. Supposing the "death" of Romans 6 were state or experience, therefore, it could not be properly described as dying *with* Christ, but *as* Christ, or *for* Christ. To many it may seem needless to dwell upon this; but no one would think so who is familiar with the misuse of the expression in the holiness preaching and perfectionist literature of the day.

In these death is made to be experience. Believers are exhorted to die. They try to *feel* dead; and if in measure insensible to insult, deprivation, and praise or blame, they consider they *have* died with Christ; never realizing the illogical use of the language in question. When did Christ have to *die* to these things? When was He ever annoyed by blame or uplifted by praise? How then could stoical resignation be likened to death with Him?

One verse of tremendous import puts the scriptural use of the term beyond all cavil: "In that He died, He died unto sin once" (Rom. 6:10). If it be said that I have "died with Him," it must be in His death, and to the same things to which He died. What then are we to learn from so solemn a statement?

Notice one thing very carefully. It does not — could not — say, "In that He died, His death was the end of inbred sin"! Yet this is what it should have said if my death with Him is the death of *my* inbred sin. But this could

never be; for He was ever the Holy One in whom was no sin.

Yet He died unto sin. In what sense? Manifestly as taking my place. As my Substitute, He died unto sin in the fullest possible sense — sin in its totality, the tree and the fruit — but all mine, not His! He “loved me, and gave Himself for me;” and in so doing He died unto sin, bearing the judgment of God due to me, the guilty one. God “hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). And having been made sin in my room and stead, and died for it, He has done with it forever — He has died *unto* it once for all, and in His death I see my death, for I died with Him!

When and where did I die with Him? There on His cross, nineteen centuries ago, when He died, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” There I, and every other child of God, died unto sin with Him, henceforth to live unto God, even as it is written, “And He died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to Him who died for them and has been raised” (2 Cor. 5:14-15, N. T.).

Who, that desires to be taught of God and to learn alone from Scripture, need stumble here? Christ’s substitutionary death is accounted by God as my death, and the death of all who believe in Him; and through that death we are introduced into our new standing as risen from the dead, and seen in Christ before His Father’s face. “He hath made us accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6). This is my new and glorious position because I have died with Christ. I need not try to die, or pray to die, or seek to feel dead (absurdity

beyond expression!); but Scripture says, “Ye *have* died, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3).

The practical results of this are many. Learning that I have died with Christ, I see at once the incongruity of denying this in my practical walk, or in any way owning the right of sin, which indwells me still, to exercise control over me. It was once my master, but Christ has died to sin — root, branch, and fruit; and His death was mine. Therefore I must in faith reckon myself to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ my Lord. Notice, I do not reckon the *sin* to be dead, or uprooted, or anything of the kind. I know it is there, but *I* am dead to it. Faith reckons with God, and says, “In Christ’s death I died out of the sphere where sin reigns. I will not obey it therefore any longer.” And while walking by faith, “sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14). What folly to speak of sin not having dominion if it be dead! The very pith and marrow of the Apostle’s teaching is that though it remains in my mortal body, I am not to let it reign there (Rom. 6:12).

While I live in this world I shall never be actually free from sin’s *presence*; but I can and should be delivered from its *power*. God hath “condemned sin *in the flesh*,” not rooted sin out of the flesh; and as I condemn it too, and refuse all allegiance to it, walking in the Spirit with Christ as my soul’s object, I am delivered from its control.

I reckon myself dead unto sin because in Christ I died to it; but it is only as I keep the distinction between the two phases of death clear in my mind that I am freed from confusion of thought.

Hoping I have been enabled of God to make this plain to any troubled one, I pass on to consider a question often asked at this point: "If what has been taught is the truth, how can I be *perfect in love* with sin still dwelling in me?" For answer to this we must turn to 1 John 4:15-19. To avoid one-sidedness, we shall quote the entire passage; and may I ask the reader to weigh every word, observing too that I am using a literal translation in closer accord with the original Greek text than our much-prized Authorized Version gives in this particular instance. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and have believed the love which God has to us. God is love; and he that abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Herein has love been perfected with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, that even as He is, we also are in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: for fear has torment; and he that fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him, because He has first loved us."

Now, with the passage before us, allow me to ask the reader four questions:

1st. Whose love is it which we have believed? See the answer in the first part of verse 16.

2d. Whose love is it in which we are called to abide? Read the latter part of the same verse.

3d. Where do we find perfect love manifested — in me, or in the cross of Christ? Note carefully verses 17 and 18.

4th. What is the result in me of coming into the knowledge of love like this? The 15th verse supplies the answer.

Now let me attempt a paraphrase of the passage, in place of an exposition, which for so simple a scripture seems needless. "Every one confessing the truth as to Jesus is at one mind with God, having received a new divine life, and thus is enabled to enjoy fellowship with God, whose mighty love we know and believe, having, indeed, rested our souls upon the greatness of that love toward us. God Himself has been revealed as love; and in that love we dwell. Knowing its perfection as manifested in the cross of Christ, we do not dread the day of judgment, because we know that love has already given Jesus to bear our sins. His death was ours; and now God sees us in Him, and we are, in God's sight, as free from all charge of guilt as His Son. Therefore we have no fear, for it is impossible that there should be fear in love: yea, this perfect love of God has banished every fear which could only torment us if this love had not been apprehended. If any still are in fear, as they think of meeting God, it is because they have not fully seen what His love has done. Their apprehension of His love is still very imperfect. But where His love is known and rested in, we love in return, for perfect love like His cannot but induce love in its object, when truly enjoyed."

Need words be multiplied? Is it not plain that there is no hint of that perfect love being developed in me, and thus my reaching a state of perfection in the flesh? On the contrary, perfect love is seen objectively in the cross of Christ, and enjoyed subjectively in the soul of the believer.

# **The Baptism of the Holy Spirit and of Fire**

It is remarkable how many expressions from the Scriptures, of diverse and widely differing meanings, are pressed into service by the perfectionists to support their views, and supposed by them to be synonymous with the Apostle Paul's "second benefit." We have already examined some of them, and shown they have no reference whatever to the theory of the eradication of inbred sin at some time subsequent to conversion. Of all these expressions, the one that heads this chapter is ever given the most prominent place, and it is triumphantly alleged, with no possibility of serious refutation, that in this at least we certainly have what to many in the beginning of this dispensation was a blessing received after having been born again. Were not

the apostles all children of God before Pentecost? Did they not all have the forgiveness of their sins? Surely. Yet who can deny that they received the Spirit only at Pentecost? And if this was so with them, how can we suppose there is any other way now of becoming fit for service? Each individual must have his own Pentecost. If he does not, he is likely to miss heaven after all. And here the holiness teacher feels sure he has clinched his favorite doctrine beyond all possibility of disproof.

Some distinguish between the baptism of the Holy Spirit and that of fire, and thus make a third blessing (!); but the majority consider the two as one — the Spirit coming upon and within the justified man, like a flame of fire, to burn out all evil and impart divine energy. Thus they sing:

*“Refining fire go through my heart,  
Illuminate my soul:  
Scatter Thy light through every part,  
And sanctify the whole.”*

We must therefore turn again to our Bibles and carefully examine all that is thus recorded concerning the Spirit’s baptism, noticing too, some other operations of the same Spirit, which have been greatly misunderstood by many. If I could feel sure that all my readers would procure a copy of S. Ridout’s “Lectures on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit,” I would not take the trouble to write this chapter. But if any find my briefer remarks at all helpful, let me urge them to read this larger work.

It was John the Baptizer who first spoke of this spiritual baptism. When the people were in danger of giving the forerunner an undue place, he pointed them on to the

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coming One, the latchet of whose sandal he felt unworthy to unbind, and he declared, "I indeed baptize you with water to repentance, but He that comes after me is mightier than I ... He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire; whose winnowing fan is in His hand, and He shall thoroughly purge His threshing-floor, and shall gather His wheat into the garner, but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable" (Matt. 3:12, N.T.).

In Mark's account no mention is made of fire. The only portion of John's declaration quoted is, "There comes He that is mightier than I after me, the thong of whose sandals I am not fit to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water, but He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:7-8, N.T.). There is a reason for the omission of "and fire," as we shall see in a few moments.

Luke's account is the fullest of all. After telling of John's mission, by emphasizing the large place that coming wrath had in it (as also in Matt. 3:7-10), "The axe," he declares, "is applied to the root of the trees; every tree, therefore, not producing good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire" (Luke 3:9). But who will execute this solemn sentence? Will it be John himself or Another to come after him? And if Another, will His coming be alone for judgment? John gives the answer farther down: "I indeed baptize you with water, but the mightier than I is coming ... He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire; whose winnowing-fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His threshing-floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner, but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable" (vers. 16-17, N. T.)

In the Gospel of John, again, as in that of Mark, nothing is said of fire. It is only, "I beheld the Spirit descending as

a dove from heaven, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not; but He who sent Me to baptize with water, He said to me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding on Him, He it is who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God (chap. 1:32-34, N.T.).

The only other promise of the Spirit's baptism is that given by the risen Lord Himself before His ascension, as recorded in Acts 1:5. After commanding the disciples to tarry at Jerusalem for the promise of the Father soon to be fulfilled, He says: "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." Again, there is no mention of fire.

In Acts 2 we have the historical fulfilment of these promises. The Holy Spirit descended from heaven and enveloped all the one hundred and twenty believers in the upper room, baptizing and indwelling them. There is no mention of the fire. Instead of that we read of something very different. "Cloven tongues *like as* of fire, sat upon each of them." Observe the statement *like as* of fire, sat upon each of them." Observe the statement carefully. It does not say a baptism of fire, but tongues, having the appearance of fire, sat upon each one. Was this that fiery baptism of which John spake? I think not — and for a very good reason.

Twice we have found the double expression used, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire." Three times we have seen the last expression omitted. Why this difference? John is addressing a mixed company in both Matthew and Luke. Some are repentant, waiting for Messiah; others are proud, haughty, hypocrites, and unbelievers. Some are humbly baptized in water, as signifying the death their sins deserve. Others evade the baptism, or would undergo it while unrepentant. John says

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in effect: Whether you are baptized by me or not, you shall all be baptized by the coming mighty One, either by the Holy Spirit, or in fire! He will make a separation between the true and the false. Every corrupt tree will come down and be hurled into the fire — baptized in the fire of judgment.

The wheat will be gathered into the garner: they will be the Spirit-baptized ones. The chaff will be cast into the fire: this will be their baptism of wrath.

In the accounts given by Mark, John, and in the Acts, there are no unbelievers introduced. Both John and Jesus are speaking only to disciples. To them they say nothing of the baptism of fire. There is no judgment — no wrath to come — for them to fear. They receive the promise of the baptism of the Spirit only, and this was fulfilled at Pentecost.

From this point on, that is from Acts 2, we never hear again of this baptism as something to be waited for, prayed for, or expected. The promise of the Father had been fulfilled. The baptism of the Holy Spirit had taken place. There was never another Pentecost recognized *in the church*. Only twice, thereafter, is the baptism so much as mentioned in the New Testament, once in Peter's account of the reception of Cornelius and other Gentiles with him into the Christian company (Acts 11:16), and then in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians where it is shown to be something past, in which all who were believers had shared: "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles" (1 Cor. 12:13), and the epistle is addressed to "all in every place, who call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:2). Many of them were weak Christians, many were carnal, many failed

to enter into much of the glorious truth pertaining to the New Dispensation, but all were baptized by the one Spirit into the one body of Christ.

We must therefore enquire carefully what that spiritual baptism accomplished, and why it took place subsequent to the new birth or conversion of the apostles and other believers in the opening of the book of Acts.

First, let it be noted, the baptism of the Spirit was a future thing until Jesus was glorified. It was after His ascension that He was to send the Spirit, who had never hitherto dwelt upon the earth. While Christ was here the Spirit was present in Him, but He did not then indwell believers. "The Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." In His last hours with His disciples He spoke of sending the Comforter, and He contrasted the two dispensations by saying, "He dwelleth *with* you, and shall be *in* you."

Secondly, observe that He was not to come for the cleansing or freeing of the disciples from sin. True, He would indwell them, to control them for Christ and empower them for holiness of life, and for authoritative testimony. But His special work was to baptize or unite all believers into one body. He came to form the body of Christ after the Head had been exalted in heaven, as Man, at God's right hand. The Saviour's work on the cross cleanses from all sin. The Holy Spirit unites the cleansed into one body with all other believers, and with their glorified Head.

Thirdly, the body being now formed, individual believers no longer wait for the promise of the Father, expecting a new descent of the Spirit; but upon their believing they are sealed with that Holy Spirit, and thus are linked up with the body already in existence.

## The Baptism of the Holy Spirit and of Fire

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In the early chapters of Acts we have a number of special manifestations of the Spirit, owing to the orderly formation of that mystical body. In Acts 2, the one hundred and twenty in the upper room are baptized into one body. Those who believed and were baptized with water, to the number of over three thousand, received the same Spirit, and were thus added by the Lord to the newly-constituted church or assembly.

In Acts 8 the word of life overleaps Jewish boundaries and goes to the Samaritans, who are obliged to wait till two apostles come from Jerusalem before they receive the Spirit — “that there should be no schism in the body.” These ancient enemies of the Jews must not think of two churches, or two bodies of Christ, but of one; hence the interval between their conversion and the reception of the Spirit upon the laying on of the apostles’ hands. The Jews and Samaritans had maintained rival religious systems and temples for hundreds of years, and the contention was very bitter between them (see John 4:19-22). So it is easy to see the wisdom of God in thus visibly and openly uniting the converts of Samaria with those of Jerusalem.

In Acts 10 the circle widens. Grace flows out to the Gentiles. Cornelius (already a pious man, undoubtedly quickened by the Spirit) and all his company hear words whereby they shall be saved — brought into the full Christian position — and as Peter preaches, the Holy Spirit falls on them all upon their believing, a manifestation of power accompanying it, as a testimony to Peter and his companions — they spake in foreign languages by divine illumination of the mind and control of the tongue. They are added to the body.

One exceptional instance remains; that recorded in Acts 19. Apollos has been preaching the baptism of John in Ephesus, knowing not the gospel of Christ's death and resurrection and the Spirit's descent. He was carrying to the dispersed Jews in Gentile cities the message of John. Instructed by Aquila and Priscilla, he received the full revelation and went on to Corinth. Paul followed him to Ephesus, and found certain disciples, who clearly came short of the Christian place and walk. To them he said, "Did ye, upon your believing, receive the Holy Spirit?" They replied, "We did not so much as hear that the Holy Spirit had come." (See the Revised Version). Now Christian baptism is "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." So Paul asks, "Unto what then were ye baptized?" This brings all out. They answer, "Unto John's baptism." Upon this the Apostle preaches the truth of the Christian revelation, setting forth Christ as the one predicted by John, who had now come, died and risen, and who had sent the Holy Spirit down from heaven. They received the message with joy, were baptized by authority of the Lord Jesus, and upon the imposition of Paul's hands, received the Comforter. They too are added to the body, and the transitional state had come to an end.

Thereafter no mention is ever made of an interval between conversion and the reception of the Spirit. He now indwells all believers, as the seal that marks them as God's (Eph. 1:13-15; see R. V.), whereby they are sealed till the day of the redemption of their bodies (Eph. 4:30).

If any have Him not, they are none of Christ's (Rom. 8:9). The indwelling Spirit is the Spirit of adoption, "whereby we cry, Abba, Father." It is therefore impossible to be a child of God and not have the Spirit. He is the earnest

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and the first-fruits of the coming glory (Rom. 8:11-17,23). He is our Anointing, and the youngest babe in Christ has this divine Unction (1 John 2:18-20,27).

Because we *have* the Spirit, we are called to “walk in the Spirit,” and to be “filled with the Spirit,” that thus our God may be glorified in us (Gal. 5:16; Eph. 5:18). But the Spirit’s indwelling does not imply or involve any alteration in or removal of the old carnal nature, for we read, “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot [or, might not] do the things that ye would” (Gal. 5:17).

Believers’ bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, and we are called to guard them from pollution, and hold them as devoted to the Lord. It is because we are thus made members of Christ and joined to the Lord that we are exhorted to flee fornication and all uncleanness (1 Cor. 6:12-20). How utterly opposed to the so-called holiness system would exhortations such as these be! Think of teaching a man that because he has the Holy Spirit, all tendency to sin has been eliminated from his being, and then exhorting him to flee fleshly lusts which war against the soul!

Because I am indwelt by the Spirit I am called to walk in a holy way, remembering that I am a member of Christ’s mystical body formed by the Spirit’s baptism at Pentecost.

The baptism of fire I shall never know. That is reserved for all who refuse the Spirit’s testimony, who shall be cast into the lake of fire when the great day of His wrath has indeed come. (If any object to this, and consider the fiery baptism to be synonymous with the “tongues like as of

fire” on Pentecost. I would ask them to carefully read again Matthew’s account of John’s ministry.) Then,

*“Deep down in the hell where all Christless ones go,  
Immersed in despair and surrounded with woe,  
They’ll be hurried along on the fiery wave,  
With no eye to pity and no arm to save.”*

God grant, my reader, that you may never know this dreadful baptism, but that if not already numbered among those baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ, you may now receive the Spirit by the hearing of faith, as did the Galatians of old when they believed the things spoken by Paul (Gal. 3:2-3).

## Perfection, As Used in Scripture

It is a common custom with one-sided special pleaders to attach arbitrary meanings to certain words, and then press them as the only correct definitions. No terms have suffered more in this respect than the words “perfect” and “perfection,” as found in our English version of the Scriptures. From the first publication of the revered John Wesley’s “Plain Account of Christian Perfection” to the present time, it seems to have been taken for granted that by perfection we are to understand sinlessness. Yet Mr. Wesley himself did not exactly so define it, and he seemed to fear a radical use of the doctrine that would be hurtful to souls, against which he carefully sought to guard by distinguishing angelic, Adamic, and Christian perfection.

Today the average work on holiness pictures the perfect Christian as a man restored, to all intents and purposes, to the Adamic condition, save that the usages of society and the condition of men still in the natural and carnal state demand the continuance of “coats of skin!”

It will be well for us, therefore, to turn at once to Scripture and mark the use of the expressions and their connection as we have already done in regard to the word “sanctification.” It is not by getting dictionary definitions or theological explanations that we learn the exact force of English words when used to translate Hebrew and Greek originals, but by observing the manner in which they are used in the Bible. For instance, in any ordinary sermon on “Perfection” the attention is generally first directed to Noah and Abraham. Of the former we read, “Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God” (Gen. 6:9). The margin gives “upright” in place of perfect, though either word would properly express the original. Noah was an upright man, perfect in his ways. That is, he was one against whose behavior no charge could be brought — until, alas, this perfect life was marred by the drunkenness so shamefully exposed by heartless Ham. Who but a biased partisan could dream of Noah’s perfection implying freedom from inbred sin! Yet many have been the sermons preached and exhortations based on this statement of the ancient record, in which he has been held up as an antediluvian example of entire sanctification.

Even in ordinary conversation the word perfect is used as here. A teacher says of a pupil who has successfully passed an examination, with no errors to his charge, “He is perfect.” Does he mean, “sinless?”

To Abram, Jehovah said, "I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). Again a glance at the margin would help to avoid a wrong conclusion. "Upright," or "sincere," are given as alternative readings. Yet the zealous advocate of a second work will overlook or ignore this altogether, and argue that God would not tell justified Abram to be perfect if He did not mean there was for him a deeper work which He was ready to perform in him, whereby all carnality would be destroyed and the patriarch would become perfect as to his inward state. But there is no such thought in the passage. Abram was called to walk before God in sincerity of heart and singleness of purpose. This was, to be "perfect."

The next proof-text generally referred to comes after the lapse of many centuries, and is part of our Lord's sermon on the mount: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). These are serious words indeed, and we do well not to pass them lightly by.

At the outset we may observe that if to be perfect here means to be absolutely like God, then no Christian has ever yet attained to the state prescribed. Only one mentally unbalanced could pretend to such perfection as this. But a careful consideration of the preceding instruction will make clear at once what is meant. The Lord had been proclaiming the law of the kingdom, the compelling power of grace. He bids His disciples love their enemies and do good to their accusers and persecutors, that *in this* they may manifestly be children of their Father in heaven, whose loving favor is shown to just and unjust alike. He does not withhold the blessings of sunshine and rain from the evil-living or hateful, but shows mercy to all. We are called to be morally like Him. To love only our friends and

well-wishers is to be on a level with any wicked man. To be kind to brethren only is to be clannish like the publicans. But to show grace and act in love toward all is to be perfect, or balanced, like the Creator Himself. Surely all Christians strive for this perfection — but who dare aver that he has fully attained to it, so that he is never unjust or partial in his dealings with others?

Perfection in its ultimate sense we all come short of. “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect,” writes the Apostle Paul, “but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12-14). Could disclaimer of perfection, as to experience and attainment in grace, be stronger or more distinct than this? Whatever others may fancy they have reached to, Paul at least was not one of the perfectionists.

Yet in the very next verse he uses another word which is rendered “perfect” in our English version; and he says, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.” Is there contradiction, or inconsistency, here? No. The error is in the mind of him who would so think. “Perfect” in verse 15 has the sense of “full grown,” and refers to those who have passed out of the period of spiritual childhood. They are such as have become intelligent in divine things; and one way in which they manifest that intelligence is by confessing with Paul that they are not yet perfect as regards experience.

Christ Jesus has apprehended, or laid hold of, us with a view to our entire conformity to His own blessed image. We are predestinated to this, as Romans 8:29 tells us. With this before us, we press on, forgetting the things of the past, and reaching forth to this glorious consummation. Then, and then only, we shall have come to Christian perfection. “We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

In Hebrews 6:1 we read again of perfection; and in this instance one can readily understand how a person uninstructed as to the true scope and character of that epistle might easily misapply the exhortation, “Let us go on unto perfection.” The contention of the holiness teacher as to this is generally as follows: These words are clearly addressed to believers. The Hebrews who are contemplated had already been turned to God in conversion.

They were undoubtedly justified. [One might add, “and sanctified too” (!); but this is lost sight of; and little wonder, for it would not agree with the theory.] Therefore if such persons are urged to “go on unto perfection,” perfection must be a second work of grace, to which the Lord is leading all the “merely justified.”

Now none could successfully deny the premise thus stated; but granting it to be sound and unassailable, the conclusion drawn by no means necessarily follows.

That the Hebrew Christians were exhorted to press on to something they had not yet reached is clear. But that this was identical with the so-called “second blessing” is not at all clear.

The truth is that the Greek word “perfection” in this instance is only another form of the word translated “perfect” in Philippians 3:15, which we have already examined and

seen to be synonymous with full-grown. "Let us go on to full growth" would be a true and just rendering, and is not at all ambiguous. It implies a proper spiritual development, such as should be before all young believers, but which it was needful to press upon these Hebrews, as they were dwarfed or stunted Christians, because of not having cut loose from Judaism with its withering, blighting influence.

Paul had already reproved them for this in the previous chapter. Note his words: "Ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age [or those who are perfect], even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:11-14).

We learn from Acts 21 the reason why these Hebrew believers had become stunted in spirituality and knowledge. James, himself an apostle, together with all the elders of the church in Jerusalem, met together to receive Paul and his companions upon their returning thither; and after hearing of what God had wrought among the Gentiles, we are told "they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law" (Acts 21:20), and upon this they base an appeal for Paul to fall in with certain Jewish rites, in order that he may not be an object of suspicion. Anxious to propitiate his own nation, the great Apostle agrees, and is only prevented by divine Providence from an act which would have been clearly contrary to

the 9th and 10th chapters of the Hebrew epistle. Think what it would have meant for him who wrote, "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin," if he had himself assisted in offering the sacrifices prescribed in the case of a Nazarite who had fulfilled his vow! (Read Num. 6:13-21, and compare with the whole account in Acts 21:23-26.) This failure God mercifully prevented, though at the cost of His dear servant's liberty. Afterward the venerable Apostle, by divine inspiration, wrote the epistle to the Hebrews,<sup>6</sup> to deliver those Jewish Christians from the bondage of the law and their subjection to the ordinances of the first covenant.

"Therefore," he says, in chapter 6, "leaving the word of the beginning of Christ,<sup>7</sup> *let us go on unto perfection*; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms (or washings), and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit" (Heb. 6:1-3).

This the Apostle does in the balance of the epistle, as he unfolds the varied lines of truth connected with Christ's priesthood, the new covenant, the one sacrifice, the walk of faith, and the Lord's discipline. This vast circle of the truth of Christianity is the *perfection* to which they, and we, are called to go on to. He who comprehends and enjoys in his soul the teaching of Hebrews — chapters 7 to 13 — is a perfect Christian, in the Apostle's sense. He is now full-

6 I know some question Paul's authorship of Hebrews, but in my judgment Peter settles that in his second letter to the Jewish believers. See 2 Peter 3:15-16.

7 The A. V. is misleading here. They were not to leave any divine principles, but the word of the beginning; that is, all teaching that was not connected with Christ risen and glorified!

grown, and able to partake of strong meat, in place of being only fit to feed upon milk. Into that glorious outline of the faith of God's elect I dare not attempt to go here, for to do so would but divert attention from the subject in hand. Others have done this in detail. Mr. S. Ridout's *Lectures on Hebrews*, and W. Kelly's *Exposition of Hebrews*, are invaluable.

It is only by reverent and continued reading of the Scriptures that any can thus become perfect. The exhortation to Timothy is of all importance: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). In the same letter Paul writes: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that *the man of God may be perfect*, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This is no mystical, inward perfection, but that well rounded knowledge of the mind of God which His Word alone can give. He who does not neglect the appointed means will be enabled to enjoy the answer to the prayer with which Hebrews closes: "Now the God of peace ... make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb. 13:20-21).

One other passage we must examine before dismissing our brief study of perfection. It is James 3:1-2: "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." With what we have already gone over, this verse needs little explanation. James,

clearly, did not possess, nor did he know of anyone who did possess, the second blessing of sinless perfection. He speaks by the Spirit of God, and tells us that we all offend in many things. If a man can be found who never offends in word — who never utters an unkind, an untruthful, or an idle word — he is in very deed a perfect man; but has he all sin rooted out of him? Far from it! He is able to control his carnal nature in place of being controlled by it; he is “able also to bridle the whole body.” What need of bridling the body if all tendency to sin is gone — if inbred evil is eradicated? Is it not plain, on the face of it, that the perfect man is not a sinless man, but a man who holds himself in check, and is not under the power of sin that still dwells in him? Read the entire chapter thoughtfully and prayerfully, and ask yourself what holiness professor has ever fully met the requirements of this standard of perfection. Who among all the people of God never has to confess failure in word? If any do *not*, it will be because they deceive themselves, and the truth is not controlling the heart and conscience.

Briefly, then, I recapitulate what has been before us.

All believers are called to walk before God, as Noah and Abram, in uprightness and sincerity of heart. This is to be perfect as to the inward life.

In so doing we are called to manifest love and grace toward all, let their treatment of us be as it may; that thus we may be perfect in impartiality as is our Father — God.

All believers are called to pass from the primary classes, in the great school of divine revelation, on to perfection; that is, lay hold of the fulness of what God has graciously been pleased to make known in Christianity.

But none are perfect in the absolute sense; though he who can control his tongue is perfect as to ability to bridle every passion; for no evil thing that works in man is more wilful than the tongue.

When we behold Him who is perfect in wisdom, grace, and beauty, we shall be like Him where He is and be forever perfected, beyond all reach of sin and failure.

“Let us therefore, as many as be full-grown, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing” (Phil. 3:15-16).

## **Cleansing From All Sin, and the Pure in Heart**

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered [or, atoned for]. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile” (Psalm 32:1-2).

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

Different as they may seem to be in subject-matter, the two passages just quoted are most intimately linked together. The blessedness therein described belongs to everyone who has honestly turned to God in repentance and trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour whose precious blood cleanseth from all sin.

Those who fancy they see in this wondrous cleansing an advance on Paul's declaration that "by Him all that believe are justified from all things," thereby betray their ignorance of Scripture and their low thoughts of the value attached by God to the atoning work of His beloved Son. When we speak of justification, we think of the entirety of sin and of sins, from the charge of which every believer is eternally freed. On the other hand, the thought of cleansing suggests at once that sin is defiling, and, till purged from its defilement, no soul can look up to God without guile, and thus be truly pure in heart.

The blessedness of Psalm 32 is not that of a sinless man, but of a man who, once guilty and defiled, has confessed his transgression unto the Lord and obtained forgiveness for the iniquity of his sin. But he has also found in the divine method of cleansing from the defilement of sin, that henceforth the Lord will not impute sin to the one whose evil nature and its fruit have all been covered by the atonement of Jesus Christ. True it is that David looked on in faith to a propitiation yet to be made. We believe in Him who has in infinite grace already accomplished that mighty work whereby sin is now forgiven and iniquity purged. God is just, and cannot forgive apart from atonement. Therefore He justifies the ungodly on the basis of the work of His Son. But God is holy likewise, and He cannot permit a defiled soul to draw nigh to Him; therefore sin must be purged. The two aspects are involved in the salvation of every believer.

He who is thus forgiven and cleansed is the man in whose spirit there is no guile; he is the one who is pure in heart. He has judged himself and his sins in the presence of God. He has nothing now to hide. His conscience is free

and his heart pure because he is honest with God and no longer seeks to cover his transgressions. All has come out in the light, and God Himself then provides the covering; or, to speak more exactly, God, who has already provided the covering, brings the honest soul into the good of it.

This is the great theme of 1 John 1:5-10, to which we must now turn. For the reader's convenience, I will quote it in full: "This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." Immediately he adds (though, unfortunately, the human chapter-division obscures the connection), "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for [the sins of] the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2).

This, then, is "the message," the great, emphatic message, of the first part of John's epistle — that "*God is light*," even as "God is love" is the message of the last part.

How solemn the moment in the soul's history when this first great fact bursts upon one! "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." It is this that makes all men in their natural condition, unsaved and unforgiven, dread meeting

Him who “seeth not as man seeth,” but is a “discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

When Christ came the light was shining, enlightening all who came in contact with it. He was Himself the light of the world. Hence His solemn words, “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (John 3:19-21). The unrepentant soul hates the light, and therefore he flees from the presence of God who is light. But he who has judged himself and owned his guilt and transgressions, as David did (in Psalm 32), no longer dreads the light, but walks in it, fearing no exposure, for he has already freely confessed his own iniquity. The day of judgment can hold no terror for the man who has previously judged himself thus, and has then, by faith, seen his sins judged by God upon the person of His Son, when made sin upon the cross. Such a man walks in the light. If any claim to be Christians and to enjoy communion with God who are still walking in the darkness, they “lie, and do not the truth.”

But if we have been thus exposed — if we turn from darkness to light and walk therein — then “we have fellowship one with another;” for in that light we find a redeemed company, self-judged and repentant like ourselves, and we know that we need not shun further manifestation, for “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

We must not pass hastily by this much-abused and greatly misapplied passage. It has been made to teach what

is utterly foreign to its meaning. Among the general run of "holiness" teachers, it is commented upon as though it read: "If we walk up to the light God gives us as to our duty, we have fellowship with all who do the same; and having fulfilled these conditions, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son washes all inbred sin out of our hearts, and makes us inwardly pure and holy, freeing us from all carnality."

Now if this be the meaning of the verse, it is evident that we have all a large contract to fulfil before we can ever know this inward cleansing. We must walk in a perfect way while still imperfect, in order to become perfect! Could any proposition be much more unreasonable, not to say unscriptural?

But a serious examination of the verse shows there is no question raised in it as to *how* we walk. It is not a matter of walking according to the light given as to our duties; but it is the place in which or where, we walk that is emphasized: "If we walk *in the light*." Once we walked in the darkness. There all unsaved people walk still. But all believers walk in that which they once dreaded — the light; which is, of course, the presence of God. In other words, they no longer seek to hide from Him, and to cover their sins. They walk openly in that all-revealing light as self-confessed sinners for whom the blood of Christ was shed.

Walking thus in the full blaze of the light, they walk not alone, but in the company of a vast host with whom they have fellowship — for all alike are self-judged, repentant souls. Nor do they dread that light and long for escape from its beams; for "the blood of Jesus Christ," once shed on Calvary's cross, now sprinkled upon that very mercy-seat in the holiest from whence the light — the Shekinah-glorious — shines, "cleanseth us from all sin." Literally, it is,

“cleanseth us from *every* sin.” Why fear the light when every sin has been atoned for by that precious blood?

The moment the soul apprehends this, all fear is gone. Notice, it is no question of the blood of Christ washing out my evil nature — eliminating “sin that dwelleth in me” — but it is that the atoning work of the Son of God avails to purge my defiled conscience from the stain of every sin that I have ever been guilty of. Though all the sins that men could commit had been laid justly to my single account, yet Christ’s blood would cleanse me from them all!

He therefore who denies his inherent sinfulness, and declares he has not sinned, misses all the blessing stored up in Christ for the one who comes to the light and confesses his transgressions. It is perhaps too much to say that verse 8 refers to holiness professors; yet such may well weigh its solemn words: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Primarily it describes such as ignore the great fact of sin, and would dare approach God apart from the cross of Christ. They are self-deceived, and know not the truth.

But it is surely serious enough to think of real Christians joining with these, and, while still in danger of falling, denying the presence of sin within them. Far better is it to say, honestly, with Paul, “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18).

The great principle on which God forgives sin is declared in 1 John 1:9. “If we confess,” He must forgive, in order to be faithful to His Son, and just to us for whom Christ died. How blessed to be resting, not only on the love and mercy of God, but on His faithfulness and justice too! To deny that one has sinned, in the face of the great work done to

save sinners, is impious beyond degree; and the one who does so is stigmatized by that most obnoxious title, "a liar!"

These things are written that believers might not sin. But immediately the Holy Spirit adds, "If any man sin, we [that is, we Christians] have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." My failure does not undo His work. On the cross He died for my sins in their totality; not merely the sins committed up to the moment of my conversion. He abides the effectual propitiation for our sins, and, for the same reason, the available means of salvation for the whole world. Trusting Him, I need hide nothing. Owing all, I am a man in whose spirit there is no guile. Living in the enjoyment of such matchless grace, I am among the pure (or single) in *heart* who see God, revealed now in Christ.

To be pure in heart is therefore the very opposite of double-mindedness. Of some of David's soldiers we read, "They were not of double heart;" or, as the Hebrew vividly puts it, "not of a heart and a heart." "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways," but the pure in heart are consciously in the light, and the inward man is thus kept for God.

In the man of Romans 7 we see described, for our blessing and instruction, the misery of double-mindedness; while the close of the chapter and the opening verses of Romans 8 portray the pure in heart. The conflict there set forth has its counterpart in every soul quickened by the Spirit of God who is seeking holiness in himself, and is still under law as a means of promoting piety. He finds two principles working within him. One is the power of the new nature; the other, of the old. But victory comes only when he condemns self altogether, and looks away to Christ

Jesus as His *all*, knowing that there is no condemnation to those who are before God in Him.

The man in Romans 7 is occupied with himself, and his disappointment and anguish spring from his inability to find in self the good which he loves. The man of Romans 8 has learned there is no good to be found in self. It is only in Christ; and his song of triumph results from the joy of having found out that he is “complete in Him.” But it will be necessary to notice these much-controverted portions of the Word of God more particularly when we come to the consideration of the teaching of Scripture as to the two natures, in our next chapter; so we refrain from further analysis of them now.

Coming back to the central theme of our present chapter, I would reiterate that “cleansing from all sin” is equivalent to “justification from all things,” save for the difference in view-point. Justification is clearing from the charge of guilt. Cleansing is freeing the conscience from the defilement of sin. It is the great aspect of the gospel treated in the beginning of Hebrews 10.

This has been already taken up at some length in the chapter on *Sanctification by the Blood of Christ*, and I need not go into it again here, save to add that the purging of the conscience there referred to should be distinguished from maintaining a good conscience in matters of daily life. In Hebrews 10 the conscience is looked at as defiled by the sins committed against God, from which the atoning work of His Son alone can purge. But he who has been thus purged, and has therefore “no more conscience of sins,” is now responsible to be careful to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and man, by walking in subjection to the Word and the Holy Spirit. By so doing

a “good conscience” will be enjoyed, which is a matter of experience; while a “purged conscience” is connected with our standing.

Should I, by lack of watching unto prayer, fall into sin, and thus become possessed of a bad conscience, I am called upon at once to judge myself before God and confess my failure. In this way I obtain once more a good conscience. But as the value of Christ’s blood was not altered in the sight of God by my sin, I do not need to seek once more for a purged conscience, as I know the efficacy of that atoning work always abides. So far as my standing is concerned, I am ever cleansed from all sin; otherwise I would be accursed from Christ the moment failure came in; but in place of this, the Word tells one, as already noted, that “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins.” Satan will at once accuse the saint who sins; but the Father’s estimation of the work of His beloved Son remaining unchanged, every accusation is met by the challenge, “The Lord rebuke thee ... is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” (Zech. 3:2). And at once, as a result of the advocacy of Christ, the Holy Spirit begins His restoring work, using the Word to convict and exercise the soul of the failed one, and, if need be, subjecting him to the rod of chastening, that he may own his sin and unsparingly judge himself for taking an unholy advantage of such grace. When this point is reached a good conscience is again enjoyed. But it is only because the blood cleanseth from every sin that this restoring work can be carried on and the link not be broken that unites the saved soul to the Saviour.



## The Believer's Two Natures

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin”  
(1 John 3:9).

We must now notice, somewhat at length, what is practically the only remaining proof-text for the theory we have been examining — that of perfection in the flesh. We turn to 1 John 3.

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law [or, doeth lawlessness; lit. trans.]: for sin is the transgression of the law [or, sin is lawlessness]. And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: *whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him*. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for *His* seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (1 John 3:4-10).

Let the reader note well two points at the outset:

First, This passage speaks of what is characteristically true of all who are born of God. It does not contemplate any select, advanced coterie of Christians who have gone on to perfection or obtained a second blessing. And it is folly to argue, as some hard-driven controversialists have done — insubject alike to Scripture and to reason — that only advanced believers, who have attained to holiness, are born of God, the rest being but begotten! This position is not tenable for a moment in view of the plain declaration in the same epistle that “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”

Second, if the passage proves that all sanctified Christians live absolutely without sinning, it proves too much; for it also tells us that “whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him.” Are the perfectionists prepared to own that if any of their number “lose the blessing” and fall away, it proves that they never did know God at all, but were hypocrites all the days of their former profession? If unwilling to take this attitude toward their failed brethren and to place themselves in the same category when they fall (as they all do eventually), they must logically confess that “committeth sin” and “sinneth not” are not to be taken in an absolute sense, as though the one expression were “falls into sin,” and the other, “never commits a sin.”

A little attention to the opening verses of 1 John 2, which have already been noticed in our previous chapter, would deliver from radicalism in the understanding of the passage now before us. There, the possibility of a believer failing and sinning is clearly taught, and the advocacy of Christ presented to keep him from despair. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." No interpretation of the balance of the epistle contradictory to this clear statement can possibly be correct.

John's epistle is one of sharp contrasts. He deals in abstract statements. Light and darkness we have already seen contrasted. No blending of these is hinted at. John knows no twilight. Love and hatred are similarly contrasted throughout the epistle. Lukewarmness in affection is not here suggested. All are either cold or hot.

So it is with sin and righteousness. It is what is characteristic that is presented for our consideration. The believer is characteristically righteous: he *does* righteousness, and *sinneth* not: that is, the whole bent of his life is good, he practices righteousness, and consequently he does not practice sin. With the unbeliever the opposite is the case. He may do many good acts (if we think only of their effect upon and his attitude toward his fellowmen), but his life is characterized by sin. He makes sin a practice. In this are manifested who are of God, and who are of Satan.

The essence of sin is — not the transgression of the law, but "lawlessness." No scholar questions now the incorrectness of the Authorized Version here. Sin is doing one's own will — that is lawlessness. This was what marked every man till grace reached him. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned *every one to his own way*; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6).

He, the sinless One, was manifested to free us from our sins — both as to guilt and power. “In Him is no sin.” Of none save Him could words like these rightfully be used. “The prince of this world cometh,” He said, “and hath nothing in Me.”

We who have been subdued by His grace and won for Himself no longer practice sin. To every truly converted soul, sin is now a foreign and hateful thing. “Whosoever practiceth sin [literal rendering] hath not seen Him, neither known Him.” This verse must not be lightly passed by. It is as absolute as any other portion of the passage. No one who has ever known Him can go on practicing sin with indifference. Backsliding there may be — and, alas, often is. But the backslider is one under the hand of God in government, and He loves him too well to permit him to continue the practice of sin. He uses the rod of discipline; and if that be not enough, cuts short his career and leaves the case for final settlement at the judgment-seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:15; 11:30-32; 2 Cor. 5:10).

The point of John’s teaching is that one who deliberately goes on in unrighteousness is not, and never has been, a child of God. He who is by faith united to the Righteous One is himself a righteous man. The one persistently practicing sin is of the devil, “for the devil sinneth from the beginning” — the entire course of the evil one has been sinful and wicked.

The 9th verse gets down to the root of the matter, and should make all plain: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit [or practice] sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin [or, be sinning], because he is born of God.” It is the believer looked at as characterized by the new nature who does not sin. True, he still has the old

carnal, Adamic nature; and if controlled by it, he would still be sinning continuously. But the new nature, imparted when he was born again, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible," is now the controlling factor of his life. With this incorruptible seed abiding in him, he cannot practice sin. He becomes like the One whose child he is.

The doctrine of the two natures is frequently stated and always implied in Scripture. If not grasped, the mind must always be in confusion as to the reasons for the conflict which every believer knows within himself, sooner or later.

This conflict is definitely declared to go on in every Christian, in Galatians 5:16-17. After various exhortations, which are utterly meaningless if addressed to sinless men and women, we read, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust [or desire] of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth [or desireth] against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot [or might not] do the things that ye would." The flesh here is not the body of the believer, but the carnal nature. It was so designated by the Lord Himself when He said to Nicodemus: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:6-7). The two natures are there, as in Galatians, placed in sharp contrast. The flesh is ever opposed to the Spirit. The new nature is born of the Spirit, and controlled by the Spirit; hence it is described according to its character. Agreement between the two there can never be; nevertheless, there is no instruction as to how the flesh may be eliminated. The Christian is simply told to walk in the Spirit; and if he does, he will not

be found fulfilling the desires of the flesh. This is the man who “sinneth not.”

The nature of the conflict is fully described in a typical case — probably the Apostle’s own at one time — in Romans 7, which has already been before us. The man therein depicted is undoubtedly a child of God, though many have questioned it. Some suppose him to be a Jew seeking justification by the law. But the subject of justification is all taken up and settled in the first five chapters of the epistle. From chapter 6 on, it is deliverance from sin’s power that is the theme. Moreover, the man of Romans 7 “delights in the law of God after the inward man.” What unconverted soul could speak like this? The “inward man” is the new nature. No Christless soul delights in what is of God. The “inward man” is opposed to “another law in my members,” which can only be the power of the old nature, the flesh. These two are here, as in John 3 and in Galatians 5, placed in sharp contrast.

Paul is describing the inevitable conflict that every believer knows when he undertakes to lead a holy life on the principle of legality. He feels instinctively that the law is spiritual, but that he himself, for some unexplained reason, is fleshly, or carnal, in bondage to sin. This discovery is one of the most heart-breaking a Christian ever made. Yet each one must and does make it for himself at some time in his experience. He finds himself doing things he knows to be wrong, and which his inmost desires are opposed to; while what he yearns to do he fails to accomplish, and does, instead, what he hates.

But this is the first part of a great lesson which all must learn who would graduate in God’s school. It is the lesson of “no confidence in the flesh”; and until it is learned there

can be no true progress in holiness. The incorrigibility of the flesh must be realized before one is ready to turn altogether from self to Christ for sanctification, as he has already done for justification.

Two conclusions are therefore drawn (Rom. 7:16-17) as a result of carefully weighing the first part of this great lesson. First, I consent that the law is good; and, in the second place, I begin to realize that I myself am on the side of that law, but there is a power within me, with which I have no desire to be identified, which keeps me from doing what I acknowledge to be good. Thus I have learned to distinguish "sin that dwelleth in me" from myself. It is a hateful intruder, albeit once my master in all things.

So I have got this far (Rom. 7:18), that I know there are two natures in me; but still, "how to perform that which is good I find not." Mere knowledge does not help. I still do the evil I hate, and I have no ability to do the good I desire. Nevertheless I am a long way toward my deliverance when I am able to distinguish the two laws, or controlling powers, of the two natures within my being. After the inward man, I delight in the holy law of God. "But I see another law (or controlling power) in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. 7:23). So wretched am I made by repeated failure, that I feel like a poor prisoner chained to a dead body — which nevertheless has over me a terrible control. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This is the cry that brings the help I need. I have been trying to deliver myself. I now realize the impossibility of this, and I cry for a Deliverer outside myself. In a moment He is revealed to my soul, and I see that He alone, who saved me at the beginning,

can keep me from sin's power. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." He must be my sanctification as well as my redemption and my righteousness.

In myself, with the mind, or the new nature, I serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the old nature, the law of sin. But when I look away from self to Christ, I see that there is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:1-2). I will not therefore struggle to be holy. I will look up to the blessed Christ of God and walk in the Spirit, assured of victory while occupied thus with Him who is my all. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:3-4).

What a relief it is, after the vain effort to eradicate sin from the flesh, when I learn that God has condemned it in the flesh, and will in His own good time free me from its presence, when at the Lord's return He shall change these vile bodies and make them like His own glorious body. Then redemption will be complete. The redemption of my soul is past, and in it I rejoice. The redemption of my body is yet to come, when the Lord Jesus returns, and this mortal shall put on immortality.

For the present, walking in the Spirit, the believer sins not. His life is a righteous one. But he needs ever to watch and pray lest in a moment of spiritual drowsiness the old nature be allowed to act, and thus his testimony be marred and his Lord dishonored.

I conclude with an illustration often used, which may help to clear up any difficulty remaining as to the truth set forth in 1 John 3. A man has an orchard of seedling oranges. He wishes to grow Washington navels instead. He therefore decides to graft his trees. He cuts off all branches close to the parent stem and inserts in each one a piece taken from a Washington navel tree. The old fruit disappears entirely, and new fruit is now on the trees in keeping with the new nature of the Washington navel inserted in them. This is a picture of conversion.

A few years roll by and we are taken by this gentleman for a walk through his orchard. On every hand the trees are loaded with beautiful golden fruit. "What kind of oranges are these?" we ask. "These are all Washington navels," is the answer. "Do they not bear seedlings now?" we inquire. "No," is the reply; "a grafted tree cannot bear seedlings." But even as he speaks we catch sight of a small orange hanging on a shoot low down on the tree. "What is that? is it not a seedling?" we ask. "Ah," he answers, "I see my man has been careless; he has allowed a shoot to grow from the old stem, and it is of the old nature of the tree. I must clip off that shoot;" and so saying, he uses the knife. Would anyone say he spoke untruthfully when he declared that a grafted tree bears Washington navels only? Surely not. All would understand that he was speaking of that which was characteristic.

And so it is with the believer. Having been born again, the old life, for him, is ended. The fruits of the flesh he is now ashamed of. The old ways he no longer walks in. His whole course of life is changed. The fruit of the Spirit is now manifested, and he cannot be sinning, for he is born of God.

But the pruning-knife of self-judgment is always needed. Otherwise the old nature will begin to manifest itself; for it is no more eradicated than is the old nature of the seedling tree after having been grafted. Hence the need of being always in subjection to the Word of God and of unsparing self-judgment. "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

To deny the presence of the old nature is but to invite defeat. It would be like the orchardist who refuses to believe it possible that seedlings could be produced if shoots from the old trunk were allowed to grow on unchecked. The part of wisdom is to recognize the danger of neglecting the use of the pruning-knife. And so, for the believer, it is only folly to ignore that sin dwells in me. To do so is but to be deceived, and to expose myself to all manner of evil things because of my failure to recognize my need of daily dependence upon God. Only as I walk in the Spirit, looking unto Jesus in a self-judged and humble condition of soul, will my life be one of holiness.

## **Concluding Remarks on “the Higher Christian Life”**

Having now reviewed the various expressions largely misused by second-blessing advocates, I desire, in concluding this series of chapters, to add a few practical reflections on what has been called “the higher Christian life.” It is greatly to be regretted that so many children of God, whose conversion one cannot question, seem to have settled down in apparent contentment with so low a standard of Christian living. Undoubtedly there is a life of power and spiritual refreshment to which these are almost total strangers. But how are they to enter into it? Certainly not by the unscriptural and empty system we have been discussing. All efforts to attain sinless perfection

in this world can only end in failure and leave the seeker disappointed and heart-sick.

Is there not then a “higher life” than that which many believers enjoy? The true answer is that there is but one life for all God’s children. Christ Himself is our life. The only difference is that in some that blessed life is more fully manifested than in others, because all do not give Him the same place in their heart’s affections. It is a sad and unsatisfactory thing when He has only the first place in our hearts. He asks for the whole heart, not a part — though it be the most important part. If He be thus enthroned, and reign alone in the seat of our affections, we shall surely manifest that divine life much more fully than if the world and self are allowed to intrude in what should be His sole abode.

The Apostle John is the New Testament writer whose special province it was to unfold for our learning the truth about divine life. In his Gospel he portrays the life as told out in the only begotten Son of God, who became flesh and tabernacled for a time among men; showing forth in all His ways “that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.” In his epistles John sets forth that life as exhibited in the children of God, who by faith have received Him who is the life, and in whom eternal life now dwells. As these precious portions of the divinely-inspired Word are meditated upon, they must produce in the soul of every devout reader a longing desire to walk more fully in the power of that life.

No human theories or earth-born principles can help us here.

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*“This does not come with houses or with gold,  
With place, with honor, and a flattering crew;  
‘Tis not in the world’s market bought and sold.”*

Only as one learns to refuse everything that is of the flesh, and finds everything in Christ the Second Man, will this priceless boon be enjoyed of a life lived in fellowship with God.

He, the eternal Son, was always the fountain of life — the source whence divine life was communicated all down through the ages to all who received the Word of God in faith. But that life was manifested on earth during His sojourn here, “and the life was the light of men.” It cast light on every man, bringing out in vivid contrast what was in them. But it is not in incarnation He communicates His own life to us. He said expressly; “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth *alone*: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” Accordingly He, the Prince of life, “tasted death for every man,” and in resurrection showed that He was indeed “that eternal life, which was with the Father” from all past ages, and had for a time been displayed on earth.

Having burst the bands of death, He appeared to His disciples as the ever-living One, forever beyond death, judgment, and condemnation of any kind. It was as such He breathed on them, saying, “Receive ye [the] Holy Spirit.” He was speaking as the last Adam, a quickening Spirit. Henceforth they are to understand that, while they have not received a different kind of a life from what was theirs from the moment they received Him and were born of God, they now have that life, with all that is connected with it, on the resurrection side of the cross. It is life with which judgment can never be connected. They are linked

up with Christ risen, and they are called to manifest this on earth, in the scene where He has been rejected.

So true Christian life is nothing more nor less than the manifestation of Christ. "For me to live is Christ" is the statement of the Apostle Paul, "and to die is gain;" for death would mean to "depart and be *with* Christ, which is far better."

The only secret of living Christ is occupation with Christ. And it is for this God has given us such abundant fulness in His Word. Another has well said that if the Bible were merely a guidebook to show the way to heaven, a very much smaller volume would have sufficed. Often the gospel has been clearly told out in a few-paged tract or booklet. But here is a book of over one thousand ordinary pages, and all of it "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works;" and the one great subject of all its sixty-six parts is *Christ*.

He who feeds upon its sacred pages is feeding on Christ, for the Word written but declares the Word eternal. To "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest" this divinely-inspired unfolding of the person and work of Christ is the paramount requisite for the believer, if he would glorify God in his practical ways.

It is related that John Bunyan had written on the fly-leaf of his Bible, "This book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book." It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance. Not for power, nor for the gift of the Spirit, nor for some special blessing, do we need to pray; but we may well join with David in the earnest petitions, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things

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out of Thy law ... Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart ... Order my steps in Thy Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me” (Ps. 119:18,34,133). By “Thy law” is meant not merely what men commonly call the moral law of God, but His entire word, so blessedly celebrated in “the psalm of the laver” — Psalm 119.

To read the Word in a mere intellectual manner will not minister Christ to the soul. Earnest, devout study of the Scriptures must never be divorced from believing prayer. It is by this means that the soul is maintained in communion with God. Prayer-less Bible reading becomes dry and unprofitable, leaving the student heady and cold-hearted. But prayerful meditation on the inspired pages will nourish the soul in divine affections.

The Word reveals Christ to us for food and example. It makes known to us the mind of the Spirit; and it is the appointed medium for the cleansing of our ways.

Not by trying to imagine what Jesus would do in my circumstances do I learn how a Christian should conduct himself in this world; but by searching the Scriptures, and tracing there the lowly path of heaven’s anointed One, I discern the way in which He would have me to walk. It is forgetfulness, or ignorance, of this that causes so many shipwrecks, not only in connection with “the higher-life movement,” but among believers generally. Human judgment takes the place of the revealed will of God, and grievous disaster is often the result.

The second point is of equal importance. Every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, as we have already seen. He has the power required for holy living therefore, and need not plead and wrestle, as is the fashion with some, for

“more power,” and “more of the Spirit.” What is required is subjection to the Word, that one may walk in the Spirit.

A simple illustration has been helpful to many: The believer may be likened to a locomotive engine, every part in working order and filled with the propelling steam — a fit symbol of the Holy Spirit. But an engine thus equipped becomes a source of terrible destruction if *off the rails*. The rails are the Word of God. Alas, how many Spirit-indwelt people have created havoc by wild, uncontrolled emotionalism, not in accordance with the Holy Scriptures! To have the Spirit does not guarantee that one will be guided aright unless he search the Scriptures and allow them to mark out his course, any more than to be well-equipped and full of steam guarantees that an engine will proceed in safety to its destination unless it be upon the rails.

The third statement has already been before us in the chapter on Sanctification by the Word; but I would press it again upon the reader's attention that the Scriptures are the water given for our practical cleansing from defilement as we go on in our appointed way through this scene. Let there be unhesitating self-judgment the moment I find my behavior or my thoughts and the word of God in conflict, and I shall undoubtedly grow in grace as well as in knowledge.

“There are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one” (1 John 5:7-8, R. V.).

The blood is the witness of propitiation, and tells of Him who, having died for our sins, is Himself the Mercy-seat, to whom we come boldly, as unto a throne of grace,

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that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help it time of need.

The water is the Word of God, as Ephesians 5:26 and Psalm 119:9 make plain. That word testifies to the advocacy of Christ, as a result of which the Holy Spirit applies the Word to the heart and conscience of the child of God, thus cleansing his ways and sanctifying him daily.

But the three must never be separated. “A threefold cord is not quickly broken.” Christ Jesus has borne my sins, and lives in glory to be my heart’s loved Object. The Spirit dwells in my body, to be the power of the new life and to guide me into all truth. The Word is the medium through which I am enlightened, directed, and cleansed.

In Ephesians 5:18-21 it is written: “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” Here is the life that is life indeed, lived out in the redeemed on earth. But how am I to be “filled with the Spirit?” Is not this, after all, that very “second blessing” which I have been concerned about? Let Colossians 3:16-17 give the answer: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.” The one passage is the complement of the other. To be filled with the Spirit, I must let the word

of Christ dwell in me richly. Then will the blessed results spoken of in both epistles be manifest in me.

Nowhere in Scripture is it taught that there is a sudden leap to be taken from carnality to spirituality, or from a life of comparative unconcern as to godliness to one of intense devotion to Christ. On the contrary, increase in piety is ever presented as a growth, which should be as normal and natural as the orderly progression in human life from infancy to full stature and power. In Peter's first epistle he writes: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby [unto salvation, R. V.]: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Peter 2:1-3). And he again emphasizes the place and importance of that word with a view to growth in spiritual strength when he says, "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And besides this, giving all diligence, add to [or, have in] your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:3-11). Here is depicted no sudden growth of spirituality acquired in a moment, as a result of some great renunciation, but a steady, sober walk with

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God, and uninterrupted growth in grace and knowledge through feeding upon the Word, and giving it its proper place in the life.

It is vain to reason that “there can be no true growth until holiness be first obtained by faith.” Nowhere does the Bible so teach; and it is self-evident that he who is called upon to lay aside all malice, guile, and similar evil things, has not been delivered from the presence of a corrupt nature. All the New Testament exhortations to godliness are addressed to men of like passions with ourselves, who need to watch and pray lest they enter into temptation, because of the fact that sin still dwells in them, always ready to assert itself if there be not continued self-judgment.

As another striking example of this, I would have the reader notice the teaching of the Apostle Paul in regard to the old and new man, in the epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians. Beginning with Ephesians 4:21, he writes: “If so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation [or, behavior] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth. (See margin.) Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another” (Eph. 4:21-25). And he follows this up with exhortations against stealing, corrupt communications, grieving the Holy Spirit, and bitterness, wrath, anger, and similar unholy things. How out of place such instruction if he is supposed to be telling the wholly sanctified how to behave! Fancy exhorting a sinless man not to grieve the

Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed until the day of redemption!

But there is neither confusion nor incongruity if I see that “the old man” stands for all that I was in my Christless days. That man is now put off. In his place I put on the new man; that is, I am called to manifest the man in Christ.

The companion-passage in Colossians is even more explicit: “But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew ... but Christ is all, and in all” (Col. 3:8-11). And upon this he now bases a positive exhortation to put on (as one would put on his garments) “tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering,” and a spirit of forgiveness toward all men; while, as a girdle to bind all in place, he counsels the putting on of “love, the uniting bond of peace.”

To practice what these several scriptures inculcate will be indeed a higher manifestation of Christian living than we generally see, and this is the only real, practical sanctification.

In closing this book on a subject so generally misapprehended, and concerning which controversy has been rife in many quarters for years, I commend all to Him whose approbation alone is of lasting value, and whose grace it is that gives the soul to enjoy in some little measure the preciousness of Him in whom holiness and righteousness have been fully told out for all His own. May

## Concluding Remarks on “the Higher Christian Life”

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He deign to use these faulty pages for the blessing of His people and the glory of His matchless name!

I have written, I trust, with malice toward none and charity toward all, however mistaken some may be as to the line of teaching they endorse. And I gladly bear record to the pious, God-fearing lives of many who profess the “second blessing;” but I have no manner of doubt that their devotedness and godliness spring from a totally different source than that to which they mistakenly ascribe it, namely, to the very thing I have been here inculcating — meditation on the Word of God, coupled with a prayerful spirit, thus leading out the heart to Christ Himself. Of this may we all know more until we see Him face to face and be forever wholly sanctified!